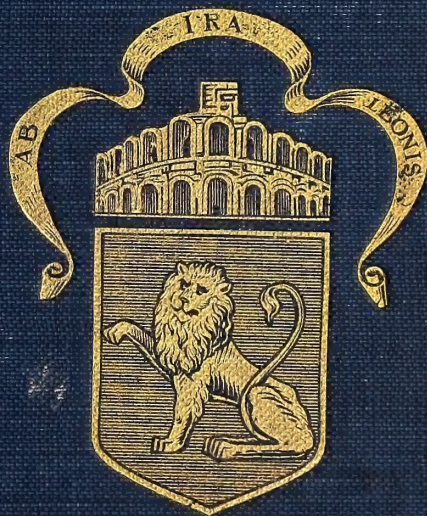
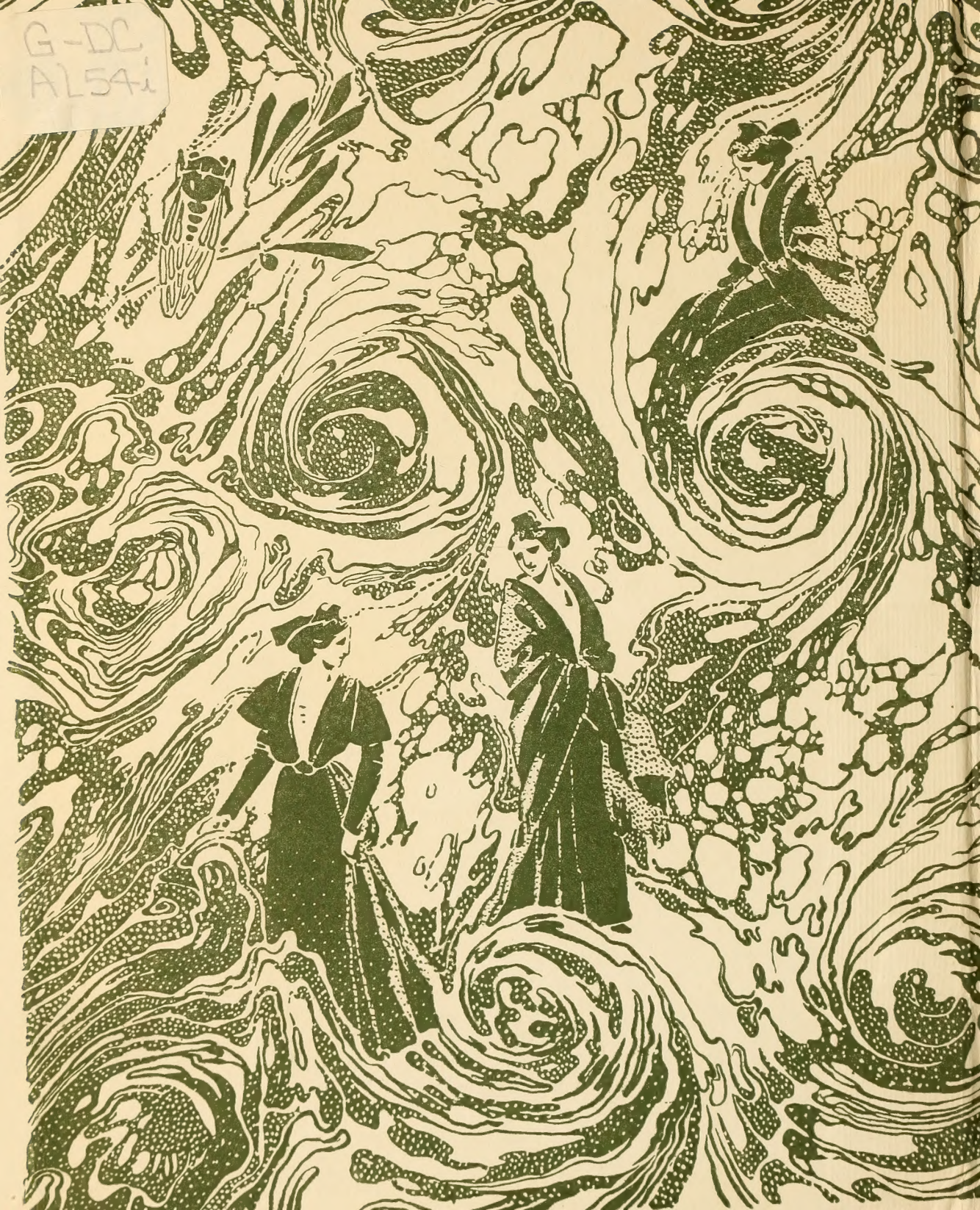


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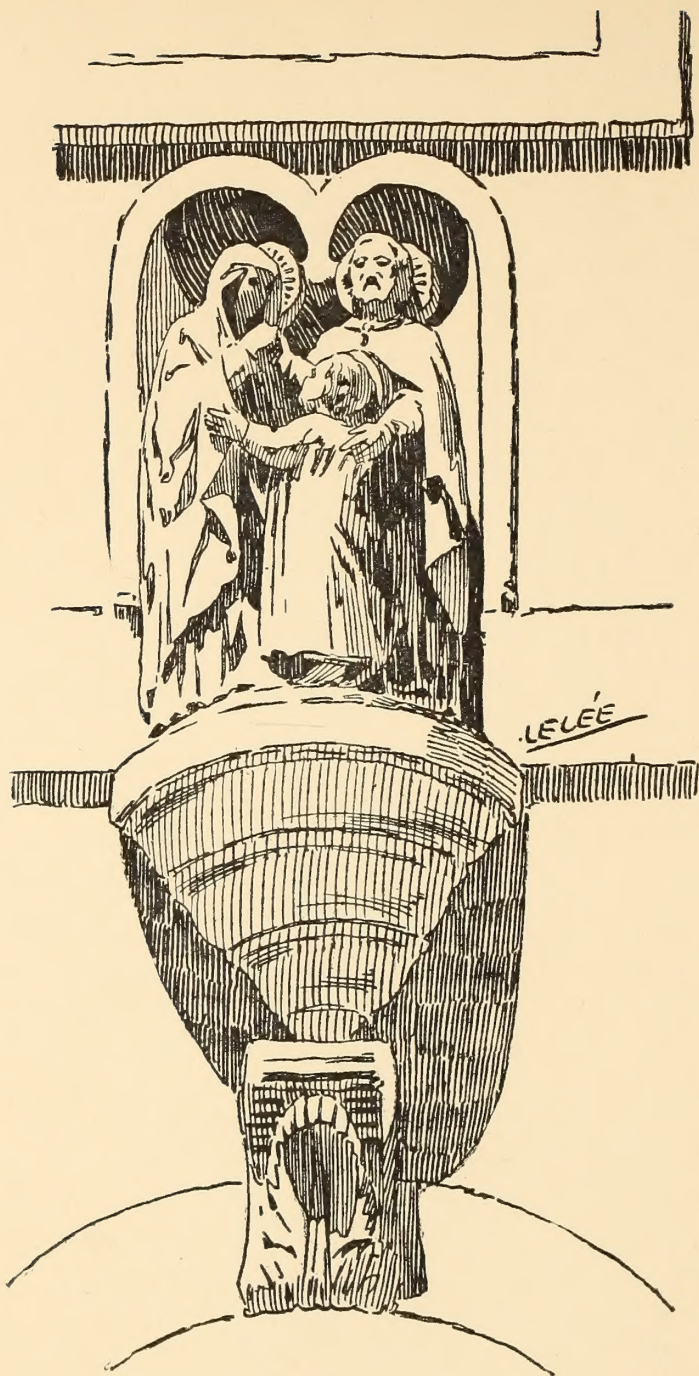
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IMPRESSIONS OF PROVENCE



THE HOLY FAMILY
(From the façade of a house at Trinquetaille, Arles)

IMPRESSIONS OF PROVENCE

BY

PERCY ALLEN

AUTHOR OF "SONGS OF OLD FRANCE"

ILLUSTRATED BY

LÉOPOLD LELÉE AND MARJORIE NASH

London:

FRANCIS GRIFFITHS

34, MAIDEN LANE, STRAND, W.C.

1910



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TO THE LADY WHO LIVED
IN A HOUSE BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD
AND WAS A FRIEND TO MAN

P R E F A C E

I HAVE to express my indebtedness to Messieurs Aubanel Frères of Avignon for permission to make use of the legends of St. Bénézet and St. Martha published in M. Barthélémy's *Légendes de la Ville d'Avignon*, from which work I have translated the bulk of those two stories as given in this book.

I must also acknowledge material—used in writing the legends of St. Gens and Les Saintes Maries de la Mer—drawn from the following works: *La Vie de Saint Gens*, by Monsieur l'Abbé D. Josselme, Curé du Beaucet, published by La Maison de la bonne Presse du Midi; and *Les Saintes Maries de Provence*, by Monsieur le Chanoine Lamoureux, published by Messieurs Moullot Fils Aîné of Marseilles. My thanks are due to Author and Editor in both cases.

I wish particularly to thank Monsieur Frédéric Mistral for kind permission to include that charming legend, "The Three Harvesters," which appeared in his well-known *Mémoires*.

I must acknowledge very gratefully my friend Monsieur Léopold Lelée's kindness to me during my stay at Arles, and also the hospitality received from friends at Les Saintes Maries de la Mer; in particular from Monsieur and Madame Ivan Pranishnikoff. It was with deep regret that I heard recently of the sudden death of my late host, whose kindness I shall always remember.

Acknowledgments are also due to Mr. F. W. Bourdillon and to the publishers, Messrs. Macmillan, for courteous permission to make use of his graceful translation of Aucassin and Nicolette.

Lastly, I have to thank the artists—Monsieur Lelée for drawings which have reproduced so faithfully the spirit of his Southern home; and Miss Marjorie Nash—now my wife—for her graceful interpretations of the legends of Provence.

P. A.

INTRODUCTION

NEARLY a year ago, at a London circulating library, I chanced to pick up a certain travel book ; when, turning over the leaves, my attention was caught by the title of a chapter " A Plea for Provence." The words struck me, because the need for such a plea had never before occurred to my mind. I had already visited the country once—though only for a short time—and had read her pleas written in letters of gold everywhere over the face of the land.

These surely are the pleas for Provence: the majestic Rhône, rolling her turbid, murmuring flood beneath the fortress-palace of the Popes, thence onward, beside the shining castles of Raymond and René, past the ancient towers of Arles, to the wider horizons, where the salt-encrusted wastes of her delta stretch out towards the tideless sea ; the yellow stones of Hercules littering the lonely plain of the Crau ; the soft, dusty leaves of the olive gardens ; the green vineyards and meadows, sheltered by the black ramparts of cypresses ; the tormented crags that hide the eagle city of Les Baux ; and the memories of Petrarch lingering in the cliff-shadowed gorge of Vaucluse.

In all these, and in a thousand other spots, the traveller will hear Provence plead for herself—where the new-caught fish are shimmering upon the quays of Les Martigues, where the water bubbles beneath the Pont du Gard, and the Southern glow is warm upon the golden monuments of Nîmes and St. Rémy ; where suns and rains beat upon the wind-ruffled grasses of

the Camargue; and the sunset lights the rosy wings of the flamingoes, as they pass to their resting-place beside the étang.

But, for lovers of books and of the people of books, Provence has yet subtler pleasures than those. There are the shades of Aucassin and Nicolette haunting the ruined citadel of Beaucaire, the music of the troubadour love-songs echoing faintly, from castle to castle, upon every sunlit crag; all the melodious enchantment, the quivering atmosphere of the passionate South.

Then, too, there are the personalities and homes of writers still living—the venerable figure of Mistral, his house at Maillane, and the Mas du Juge lying among golden cornfields; the little village at the foot of the Alpines, where, at this moment, the fowls are scratching about the cottage of the poet of Paradou; and in Arles, the dark figure of the carter-poet, La Forêt, walking at the head of his team.

Besides all these, are there not a thousand benignant historic memories, fragrant shades of dead princesses, whose names are music—Alix, Blanchefleur, and Clémence—gracious legends that link us, as with a golden thread, to the past of a land whose children love to listen when “a church, mighty and learned, stooped down to talk with them in a language that they could understand”; and by so doing to fashion, for us older children, fairy stories in whose beauty we could awake again the magic of the sleeping past, and weave a fairer hope into our dreams of what is to come?

That is why the legends of Provence allure me; that is why, sometimes, on summer evenings, I love to follow the three silent harvesters across the cornfields of Maillane, to listen to the holy women preaching to the fishermen of the Camargue, or, in the lonely valley of Baucet, to meditate awhile with the boy-saint of Provence.

Sometimes, in other mood, I pursue the fairy Esterelle when, in quest of the dawn, she tiptoes over the rosy peaks of

the Luberon ; sometimes I am lured by the bleat of the golden goat, heard in the moonlight upon the hills of Cordes, or among the ruined palaces of Les Baux.

For love of these things I follow, follow, follow ; not caring to inquire too closely, nor to distinguish nicely between delicious fancy and sober fact, because always, as indeed with life itself, "*les légendes comme les amours gagnent à garder un peu de mystère.*" . . . "*Oui ! ici en Provence, dans un pays tout de lumière et de belle réalité, aux horizons jamais voilés, aux nuits claires et sans fantôme, je rêve ainsi tout éveillé le plus merveilleux des rêves.*" . . ."¹

One word of warning. Let no traveller who knows not Provence believe that here, more than in other lands, he shall escape his measure of woe.

According to the season, he will be grilled by the sun, or buffeted and frozen by the mistral ; he will be parched by dust, tortured by mosquitoes, harassed by sudden floods ; he will experience occasional miseries inseparable from a sojourn among a people ignorant and careless of hygiene. But, if he have an eye for Southern landscape, and for the lines of memorial stones ; if he care for classic beauty still perpetuated in living women ; if he love warmth and light, colour, laughter, and song ; if he have an ear for a gracious legend, and a tale of love ; if there be that in him which will respond to the spirit of romance beckoning to him at the turn of every white, winding lane, he will find, on his return, that, henceforth, all these delights make up for him the magic of Provence ; and that it is true of her name, as as it is true of her loveliest love-song, that sick men may hear it and be healed,

"Tant par est douce."

¹ Paul Arène.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

RECORDS OF ROME

	PAGE
Orange—The Roman Theatre—The Church—Cypresses—The Triumphal Arch—The Waiter—The Road to Carpentras—Sarriens—Carpentras—A Feminine Tribunal—The Triumphal Arch—Esterelle—Knights-Errant All	I

CHAPTER II

IN THE CITY OF CAVAILLON

On the Road to Cavaillon—A Provençal—Conscripts—A Child's Funeral—The Cloisters—The Roman Monument—The Road to St. Rémy	15
---	----

CHAPTER III

THE MAIDS OF ST. RÉMY

Daudet and Mistral—An Enthusiast—A Dame of St. Rémy—Beauty and the Church—The Plateau des Antiquités	23
--	----

CHAPTER IV

THE POET OF MAILLANE

The House at Maillane—The Man—Mistral's Double—A Dog Story—Marguerite de Provence—The Legend of the Three Harvesters	31
--	----

CHAPTER V

A LOVE-SONG OF THE SOUTH

From the Castle of Beaucaire—Aucassin and Nicolette—The Chapel of St. Louis—The Siege of Beaucaire	40
--	----

CHAPTER VI

TARASCON AND ITS SAINT

	PAGE
The Town—The Legend of St. Martha—The Evolution of the Christian Legend	52

CHAPTER VII

THE ALPINES AND THEIR CITADEL

From Tarascon to St. Rémy—Two Wild Ones of the Hills—The Ascent to Les Baux—The Dead City—Lords of Les Baux—A Peasant Woman—The Tremaie—In the Gorge d'Enfer—The Quarries—Alphonse Daudet's Mill	57
--	----

CHAPTER VIII

THE VENICE OF THE MIDI

The Road to Les Martigues—Hercules and the Giants—The Crau—In the Grip of the Mistral—Some Wind Stories—Entressen—Les Martigues—The Death Fires—Children of Italy—The French Venice—Marguerite—A Recollection	72
---	----

CHAPTER IX

MARSEILLES

The Approach to a Great City—The Cathedral—St. Victor—Notre Dame de la Garde—Bouillabaisse—In a Café of the Midi—The Château d'If—Marseilles from the Sea	89
---	----

CHAPTER X

AT AIX EN PROVENCE

Among Meadows Again—The Cathedral of St. Sauveur—Les Cloches de Corneville—King René's <i>Book of Hours</i> —The Road to Pourrières—The Landlady—The Victory of Marius—La Vieille Fontaine—The Christian Legend—A Contravention	97
---	----

CHAPTER XI

THE PEASANT POET AND OTHER MATTERS

The Road to Salon—The Mistral again—St. Cannat—The Spirit and the Flesh—Third-Class Observations—In Search of Charloun—The Peasant Poet—No Hurry	109
--	-----

CONTENTS

xvii

CHAPTER XII

THE CAMARGUE AND ITS LEGEND

	PAGE
Crossing the Waste—Les Saintes Maries de la Mer—The Legend—The Fortress Church—Miracles—Monsieur le Curé	116

CHAPTER XIII

BESIDE THE DEAD WATERS

A Reminiscence of the Flood—Grau du Roi—By the Tideless Sea—The Fortifications—St. Louis—The Tour Constance—A Daughter of Bérénice	124
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV

CARCASSONNE

First Impressions—A Siege—St. Nazaire—The Last of De Montfort—History—Dreams—A Coup d'Œil—The Embracement—The Modern Town—The Picture Gallery—A Wedding Function—The Witch of Moux	133
--	-----

CHAPTER XV

THE CITY OF THE POPES

The Rhône by Night—At the Hôtel d'Europe—Two Breakfasts—The Rocher des Doms—The Legend of St. Bénézet—Avignon's Past—The Palace of the Popes—Notre Dame des Doms—The Félibres—The Troubadours—The Lyrical Poetry of Provence—A Story of Roumanille—Villeneuve lès Avignon—Le Fort St. André—Decadence	146
---	-----

CHAPTER XVI

AROUND L'ISLE SUR SORGUE

The Road from Avignon—Noves—Caumont—L'Isle sur Sorgue—L'Hôtel St. Martin—The Proprietor—The Trout—Vaucluse—Petrarch and Laura—St. Didier—St. Gens—The Little Cuisinier—Le Thor—The Legend of the Bull—Ste. Marie of the Lake—The Priest-Musician—The Road to Monteux—The Home of St. Gens—A Talk with Mistral—Epatant!—Château Renard—L'Isle again—The Cavalcade—The Goddess—Circus Scenes	168
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII

THE FÊTE OF ST. GENS

St. Didier—Children worth having—The Legend of St. Gens—The Pro-	
--	--

	PAGE
cession—The Reception—Hymns and the Moon—Early in the Morning— The Bed of St. Gens—The Service—Lunch—The Grand Magasin— The Cross of Meeting—The Fountain—The Old Way and the New—What should have been	185

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CITY OF DREAMS

Greek or Roman?—Montmajour—St. Peter's Chapel—Cordes—The Chèvre d'Or—The Chapel of St. Croix—The Graves in the Rock—Seen from the Donjon Tower—A Hard Life—The Amphitheatre—The Vestal Virgins of To-day—The Greek Theatre—The Musée Réattu—The Palace of Constantine—La Roquette—The Theatre by Moonlight—The Fair in the Lices	204
---	-----

CHAPTER XIX

MORE OF ARLES AND OF HER WOMEN

The Alicamps by Day—By Night—The Place des Hommes—The Palais de Justice—St. Trophimus—Ascension Day—Communicants—Church Parade in the Lices—Types of Arlésiennes—Daudet's Slander—The Arlesian Character—The Musée Lapidaire—Old Corners of Arles—A Converted Church—The Silk-Worms—The Lure of Arles—St. Gilles	231
--	-----

CHAPTER XX

LES SAINTES MARIES DE LA MER

THE RELIGIOUS FÊTES

Preliminaries—The Lonely Mas—East and West—The White Horses of the Camargue—A Gallop with the Bulls—Gipsies—A Busy Village—Within the Church—The Descent of the Relics—A Provençal Oration—Church Etiquette in Les Saintes—An Escape—The Archbishop—The People and the Pope—The Procession to the Sea—The Raising of the Châsse— Miracle—The Vespers of the Sea	258
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI

LES SAINTES MARIES DE LA MER

THE CIVIL FÊTES

Gens de Théâtre—Mireille—In Quest of the Bulls—Cinematograph— A Rehearsal by the Rhône—The Entry of the Bulls—The Courses Proven- çales—The Setting of the "Fight"—The Comedy of It—The "Fight" Described—The Return of the Bulls	278
--	-----

CONTENTS

xix

CHAPTER XXII

AMONG THE FLAMINGOES

	PAGE
Into the Wilds—The Birds—The Flight—Scenes by the Vaccarès—A Walk with the Roman—The Magpie's Nest—Litany—The Return—Dwellers on the Camargue—A Swim—The Jongleur in the Café—Magali—A Memory of Les Saintes	290

CHAPTER XXIII

NÎMES AND A BULL-FIGHT

Prosperous Protestantism—Le Jardin de la Fontaine—The Temple of the Nymphs—The Maison Carrée—The Arènes—"Monsieur est Picador"—The Pont du Gard—A Town Besieged—The Setting of the Bull-Fight—The Battle—The Provençal Point of View—A Terrible Bull—The End	297
INDEX	317

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
ARLES. HOLY FAMILY ON THE FAÇADE OF A HOUSE AT TRINQUETAILLE	
<i>Frontispiece</i>	
ORANGE. THE ROMAN THEATRE <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	2
CARPENTRAS. THE PORTE D'ORANGE " "	9
"NYMPHE, DÉESSE, OU PASTOURELLE, } QUI, DONC, ES-TU, FÉE ESTERELLE?" }	11
CARPENTRAS. THE PORTE DE MONTEUX <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	13
BAL MASQUÉ <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	14
IN THE CLOISTER " "	20
CAVAILLON. TRIUMPHAL ARCH <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	22
A LADY OF ST. RÉMY " "	24
ST. RÉMY. LATE FOR CHURCH " "	25
" A BACK VIEW " "	26
" THE ROMAN MONUMENTS " "	27
" ANCIENT CHURCH OF NÔTRE DAME DE } PIÉTÉ }	29
THE "GIANT" <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	30
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF MIREILLE, AT ARLES <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	31
" " " " " " " " " " " "	32
FRÉDÉRIC MISTRAL " "	33
THE THREE HARVESTERS (LEGEND) <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	35
" " " " " " " " " " " "	39

	PAGE
NICOLETTE IN THE MOONLIGHT <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	40
AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE " "	45
BEAUCAIRE. THE CASTLE <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	49
AFTER THE FIGHT <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	51
THE LEGEND OF ST. MARTHA " "	52
" " " " "	56
AN OLIVE-GATHERER <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	58
LES BAUX. THE ROCKS " "	60
" THE CASTLE " "	61
" THE RUINS " "	63
" LOOKING TOWARDS THE CRAU " "	64
AN OLIVE-GATHERER " "	65
LES BAUX. THE CYPRESSES " "	66
OLIVE MILL AT FONTVIEILLE " "	69
AN OLIVE-GATHERER " "	71
THE CRAU. A SHEPHERD " "	73
MIRAMAS " "	75
AT LES MARTIGUES " "	77
" " " "	81
ST. CHAMAS. THE PONT FLAVIEN " "	84
AT LES MARTIGUES " "	87
NEARING PORT <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	96
MEDITATION " "	99
LE CASTELET (NEAR ARLES) <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	107
A WINDY RIDE <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	109
AN OLIVE-GATHERER <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	112

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xxiii

	PAGE
CHARLOUN IN HIS COTTAGE AT PARADOU <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	112
"ALL THAT TAKES TIME" <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	115
IN THE CAMARGUE <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	117
THE LEGEND OF LES SAINTES MARIES <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	118
THE TWO MARYS " "	121
LES SAINTES MARIES DE LA MER, SHOWING THE } CHURCH	<i>Léopold Lelée</i> 122
AIGUES-MORTES. THE RAMPARTS AND THE TOUR } CONSTANCE, SEEN FROM THE } CANAL	" " 126
" " A GATE IN THE RAMPARTS	" " 128
" " SALLE DES CHEVALIERS, TOUR } CONSTANCE	" " 130
" " THE RAMPARTS	" " 130
" " " "	<i>Marjorie Nash</i> 132
CARCASSONNE	<i>Léopold Lelée</i> 135
THE CATS AND THEIR OWNER	<i>Marjorie Nash</i> 145
AVIGNON. THE PALACE OF THE POPES AND CATHEDRAL	<i>Léopold Lelée</i> 146
" THE BRIDGE ST. BÉNÉZET	" " 148
BÉNÉZET CARRYING THE STONE (LEGEND)	<i>Marjorie Nash</i> 149
BÉNÉZET AND THE ANGEL (LEGEND)	" " 152
AVIGNON. GATE IN THE RAMPARTS	<i>Léopold Lelée</i> 154
" THE PALACE OF THE POPES	" " 157
VILLENEUVE LES AVIGNONS. TOUR PHILIPPE LE BEL	" " 164
" " THE FORT ST. ANDRÉ	" " 166
HOLY FATHER	<i>Marjorie Nash</i> 167
VAUCLUSE. THE CASTLE	<i>Léopold Lelée</i> 171
LE THOR. THE LEGEND OF THE BULL	<i>Marjorie Nash</i> 175

	PAGE
ST. MARY OF THE LAKE <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	176
THE PRIEST AT THE ORGAN " "	177
ST. GENS AND THE WOLF " "	188
THE LEGEND OF ST. GENS " "	192
AT THE MIRACULOUS FOUNTAIN " "	203
FOURQUES. THE FORTIFIED COURTYARD (INTERIOR) <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	205
THE ABBEY OF MONTMAJOUR " "	206
AN ARLÉSIENNE " "	207
MONTMAJOUR. THE TOMBS CUT IN THE ROCK AROUND } THE CHAPEL OF SAINTE CROIX }	209
FOURQUES. THE FORTIFIED COURTYARD (INTERIOR) " "	211
ARLES. THE PERGOULADO (TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION) " "	212
ARLÉSIENNE " "	213
AN ARLÉSIENNE " "	214
ARLES. STUDIES OF ARLÉSIENNES AT A BULL-FIGHT } IN THE ARENA }	215
AN ARLÉSIENNE " "	216
" " " "	217
" " " "	218
FOURQUES. THE FORTIFIED COURTYARD (INTERIOR) " "	219
ARLES. LES THERMES, KNOWN AS THE PALACE OF } CONSTANTINE }	220
AN ARLÉSIENNE " "	221
ARLES. THE "CHAMBRE DES MARINS" ON THE } QUAI DE LA ROQUETTE }	222
AN ARLÉSIENNE " "	223
" " " "	223

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xxv

	PAGE
ARLES. COAT OF ARMS ON THE FAÇADE OF THE } <i>Léopold Lelée</i> ANCIENT MOULIN DE LA ROQUETTE . }	223
„ THE GRÆCO-ROMAN THEATRE, SEEN FROM } THE MUSÉE DU THÉÂTRE . }	224
„ THE GRÆCO-ROMAN THEATRE BY MOONLIGHT „ „	224
„ APSE OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH OF ST. } JEAN DU MOUSTIER . }	226
„ STUDIES IN THE MARKET . . . „ „	227
BARBEGAL, NEAR ARLES. RUINS OF ROMAN } AQUEDUCT }	228
ARLES. GENERAL VIEW „ „	229
„ THE ALISCAMPS AND THE CHURCH OF ST. } HONORAT }	230
„ THE HOUSE BETWEEN THE RAILWAY LINES, } SHOWING THE GALLO-ROMAN TOMBS . }	232
„ A SHRINE „ „	234
„ EAVES TIMBERS „ „	234
„ STUDIES OF ARLÉSIENNES BEFORE ST. } TROPHIMUS }	236
THE FAÇADE OF ST. TROPHIMUS „ „	237
AN ARLÉSIENNE „ „	238
ARLES. IN ST. TROPHIMUS „ „	239
„ THE PROCESSION OF COMMUNICANTS . „ „	240
„ THE LAST RITES „ „	241
„ AT PRAYER „ „	242
„ LEAVING ST. TROPHIMUS „ „	242
„ CHURCH PARADE IN THE LICES „ „	243
„ ON THE STEPS OF ST. TROPHIMUS „ „	244

	PAGE
ARLES. A PAGE OF STUDIES <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	245
„ A WINDY DAY „ „	246
„ HEAD IN THE MUSÉE LAPIDAIRE „ „	247
„ THE ALTAR TO THE BONA DEA, MUSÉE } LAPIDAIRE }	249
„ ARLÉSIENNE „ „	250
„ THE RENAISSANCE WELL IN THE COURTYARD } OF A HOUSE IN THE RUE DES ARÈNES . }	251
„ COURTYARD OF THE ANCIENT HÔTEL NICOLAI „ „	253
AN OLD WOMAN OF ARLES „ „	254
ARLES. EAVES TIMBERS „ „	255
ARLÉSIENNES „ „	256
AN OLD WOMAN OF ARLES „ „	257
LES SAINTES MARIES DE LA MER „ „	258
MAS IN THE CAMARGUE „ „	261
GIPSIES IN THE CHURCH „ „	266
WORSHIPPERS AROUND THE CHASSE „ „	270
THE PROCESSION TO THE SEA „ „	274
BY THE SHORE <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	277
FLAMINGOES „ „	289
MAS IN THE CAMARGUE <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	293
SAINT MARTIN'S EVE „ „	296
TOREADOR AND BULL <i>Marjorie Nash</i>	298
NÎMES. THE TEMPLE OF THE NYMPHS, OR NYMPHÆUM <i>Léopold Lelée</i>	299
THE PONT DU GARD „ „	303
NÎMES. THE TOUR MAGNE „ „	316
SKETCH MAP	316

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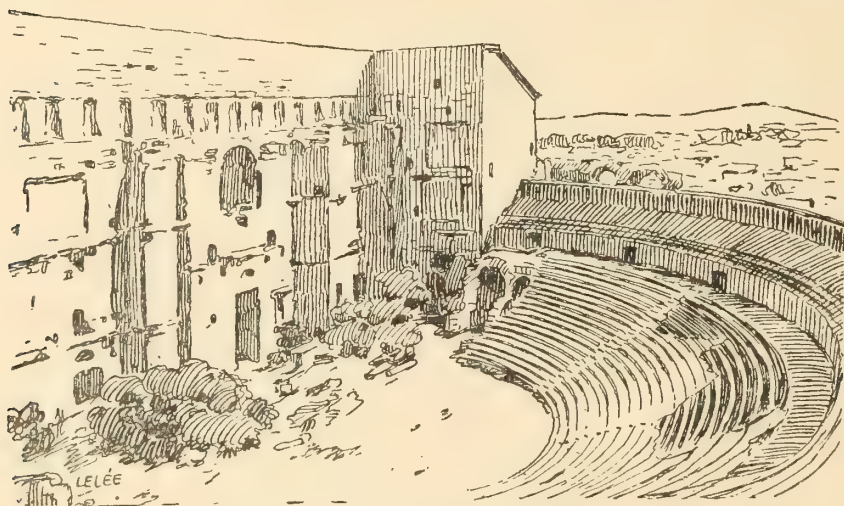
CHAPTER I

RECORDS OF ROME

DESPITE the fame of its monuments and the familiarity of its name to English ears, Orange is one of the places that somehow I had overlooked during my last short visit to Provence. That is why, taking my earliest opportunity to repair the omission, I find myself sitting, in the mild March sunshine, upon an upper seat of the Roman theatre. Above me, to the right, rises the mass of rock—once crowned by the Roman citadel—upon whose slope the auditorium is built, and, to my left, the majestic, ivy-clad front wall of the theatre, from whose corbels was stretched, upon masts, the awning to shade players and spectators from the sun. The white half-circles of hewn stone, shining in the bright light, still show, here and there, the paper numbers that tell of the annual August day when this old home of the drama awakes out of sleep. Upon one of those stones a patient observer may find graved *Eq: CIII*, showing that this was the third row of the seats allotted to the knights.

Directly below me is the space formerly occupied by the stage, but now overgrown with rich, green patches of grass, and littered with pathetic fragments of stately columns, carved

capitals, sculptured friezes, and all the general ruin of the theatre's adornment, from among which grow bushes and briars that wear already their first tender garment of green. Above them, one old gaunt fig tree raises her twisted boughs. Grass grows, too, among the lower tiers of the seats, and carpets the intervening corridors. To my left, high above me, sheltering in its crannies little shrubs and bushes, and bouquets of bright wall-flower whose colour contrasts harmoniously with



ORANGE. THE ROMAN THEATRE.

the duller gold of the stone, rises the great, grim, Roman wall that has borrowed a soft, golden glow from nineteen centuries of Southern sun. Here and there the yellow hue of the masonry darkens into a deep, rich red. The stillness is unbroken, except by the breeze that sighs from the south, stirring the ivy upon ruined walls. All shines in a soft, radiant light. Not a living thing is to be seen within; only, without, through the eastern entrance, under the great, round arch all dark with shadow, I can see two dogs playing in the street; and now a cart rattles by, and a black-frocked curé passes. Far away in

the distance, over the eastern wall, a white village gleams upon the slope of a hill, and beyond it, cloud-capped and mysterious, rises the Mont Ventoux. I descend to what was once the stage, and wander awhile among the ruins. How impressive, how solemn it all is! I do not wish to hear modern actors declaiming from this stage, nor to see these tiers crowded with a Provençal audience. Better, here, to be alone with the dead.

How lively and full of colour the town seems to be on this market-day, after the sober silence of that Roman theatre. Here are laughter and babble of tongues; chaffering, chaffing, chattering, bargaining old women, in white kerchiefs, sitting over their baskets that are bright with golden oranges. There are blue-bloused peasants with their arms full of purchases, and young girls using their Southern eyes for prettier purposes than their employers intended.

I enter the church, a dark, dismal, tawdrily decorated building, with many side chapels. Two old women are here, praying, and a third is trying to read her book of prayers by the flickering light of a candle. A young priest enters, kneels before the eastern altar and there prays devoutly; the two old women grope their way, tottering from prie-dieu to prie-dieu, doing the round of the chapels. A little girl, dark-haired, dark-eyed, dressed in a crimson frock, creeps in timidly, crossing herself. Very prettily she makes her obeisance toward the altar, and darts one glance at the stranger before burying her face in her hands. Crash! crash! crash! a workman, unnoticed in the darkest corner, is mending or marring I know not what; the blows of the hammer resound and echo through the church. No one stirs nor seems to hear the din. The lips of the priest still move; the heads of the old women remain bent, but for me the spell is broken; I go out into the sunlight.

This hotel is deserted and dreary as second-rate French hotels usually are; moreover, the discipline among the employées is evidently lax, since the waiter sees fit to join me

in the writing-room, where he reads *Le Petit Marseillais*. But I forget the hotel, I forget the waiter. My thoughts fly back to Paris that I have just left, thence southward again to this valley of the Rhône where the cypresses show so proudly black against the sunlight. I recall the pleasure that this sight of them renewed in me. I have always found them strangely fascinating and suggestive, these trees that the peasants plant as fortress walls against the mistral. Yet it is not as fortress walls, but more often, somehow, as living ramparts that they picture themselves to me.

Sometimes, when they are very sere, and bent, and huddled, I think of them as of old gardener Adams guarding the crops; sometimes, when they are slender and graceful, drooping wearily to the south, they are to me a bevy of Northern princesses, who for some unrepented, royal crime have been borne away by enchantment to this Southern land, here to bear for a season the icy blasts from the home they love, and to feel upon their fair Northern faces the scorching heat and dazzling light of Provence. Sometimes, when I see the freshly planted trees, frail and delicate, with space between them, taking light and colour from the sun, I think of them as of a processional frieze of vestal virgins who have stepped down in all their soft delight of youth, of dainty fold and clinging drapery, from an architrave of a Greek temple.

But, seen only as cypresses again, how romantically their darkness contrasts with the gold and silver glow of Provence. But an hour ago I came upon a glorious hedge of them planted in a curve. The centre of each tree showed a green that was almost black; gradually toning, as the rounded growth took a fuller and fuller light, into a deep, rich colour that brightened, at the trees' very edge, into a golden halo. But perhaps the cypresses are most effective of all when their pointed tops darken into one long, jetty frieze, silhouetted against the crimson sunset. And they are often to be seen so in Provence.

No more of this idle dreaming! I will visit the other monument at Orange—the Roman triumphal arch.

If not in the purest style of the Corinthian monument, it is, nevertheless, a very magnificent specimen of Roman work, triumphant as a triumphal arch should be, standing there, proudly, upon the northern entrance to the town. I like the engaged Corinthian columns between which the chained captives stand; I like the richness of the sculptured trophies of arms upon the frieze and the archivolts; and the life and energy of the battle-scene upon the great attic story. I like, too, the golden glow that is over it all. This monument lacks the perfect grace of the smaller and earlier arch that I saw later at St. Rémy—it conveys a slight suggestion of top-heaviness, and is perhaps over-richly ornamented—but it raises a louder note of triumph than either of its two rivals in Provence. Its state of preservation is excellent, when we remember that, for a considerable period, it formed one of the fortresses of the town.

This hotel is very unpleasantly commercial, and is managed, or mismanaged, with a quite Southern insouciance. The personality of this waiter suggests that, but for his nationality, he might be descended from the fat boy in *Pickwick*. He is thick and phlegmatic, with a heavy, sleepy face, and a long moustache that lounges as irresponsibly upon his lip as its owner does upon the staircase. His natural function in life appears to be that of a reader of *Le Petit Marseillais*; which he devours in season and out of season. When I came in to tea—the worst tea that ever I came in to, even in France—he was reading it in a wicker armchair in the lobby. When I returned from a stroll round the triumphal arch, I had to step over him as he lay diagonally, face downwards, upon the dirty staircase, near the first-floor landing, his eyes glued upon the sheet. When I came down to dinner he was reading it, in the same attitude, on the third and fourth steps up from the

ground floor; and—dinner cleared away—I am convinced that, curled up before the dying embers of the kitchen fire, he is passing the evening over its advertisements.

Peals of laughter in this dull old hotel—the light, bright, lyrical laughter of a little girl, and the ping pong, ping pong of a rubber ball upon the hall paving. I had been wishing for music, and I have it. La petite Marcelle and her still smaller brother are at play, their feet flickering over the hall. I go out to see them. They have both cushioned up violently against the Marseillais, who was coming from the dining-room. He smiles upon them a watery smile. Their mother, hearing the tapage, comes from the bureau to take them both to bed; so I shall have no more music to-night. I wish that I had a daughter with just such a laugh as that, and those wild, dark, Southern eyes. To-morrow I will cycle to Carpentras.

This is the road to Carpentras. Away before me rise the giant Ventoux and its neighbour giants, veiled in heavy clouds, their lower slopes aglow with lurid lights that reveal wild and weirdly shaped rocks among which white villages vanish, like phantom cities, mysteriously into mist; the road, slightly undulating, passes through pleasant, well-cultivated fields, their expanse broken by a charming variety of outline and colour. The landscape shines, very silent, very beautiful. Above me great luminous islands of cumulous cloud, shaded from pearly grey to dazzling silver where the light streams through their edges, are afloat in a sea of delicate blue. Northward, splendidly set off by the pale sky, a stately cypress-hedge lifts countless pinnacles, and in the middle distance, against the background of those mysteriously lurid hills, rise, one by one, the straight stems of the tufted poplars, and here and there a brown clump of forest trees. Yellow farmhouses, roofed with the pleasing mottled tiles of Provence, are to be seen at intervals. In the nearest field a man is sowing, scattering the seed right and left with a rhythmically alternate movement

of either arm: a farm boy is ploughing with a white horse and a brown one; his cries, "Hue donc, hue donc,"—uncouth to an English ear—come to me across the low hedge. Larks are singing in the air. From the first farmhouse two mongrel dogs who have seen the stranger, come running out to bark at him.

Towards the barn, along the field-path, an old, white-hooded woman passes, bearing an armful of green stuff. In the far distance I see a train moving on the line to Carpentras; the rumble of it comes to me, and a thin trail of smoke rises above the cypresses. I watch it vanish; I feel close to nature once more.

I have lunched simply, and with enjoyment, at a marble table outside a dirty little café in what I afterwards discover to be the village of Sarriens. It is large and straggling, but the *place*, even as I see it now in March, is not unattractive, and must be pleasant indeed when summer has decked the great, gnarled plane trees to their duty of shading the quadrangle of stone blocks—the villagers' seats—that are ranged, end to end, round the square. On one of them sits a little scarlet-skirted maid whose long, black hair hangs down over a bright, check bodice. She is sewing industriously—very industriously for a Provençale—at a large crimson and white striped cushion; but now she leaves it on the stone, and joins a group of brightly-clad women who are working before a beautiful old Gothic gate. They, too, are very industrious, stitching, stitching. A group nearer to me, in front of a little disreputable looking "Casino," are sewing also. They are dressed all in blue, and are working at scarlet garments—they love scarlet these women of Provence.

How much more interesting it is to lunch so, among the villagers, the dogs, the cats, and the general dirt and litter of a village in the Midi, than among commercial travellers in the coffee-room of a second-rate hotel. And if, occasionally, evil

odours do arise—and they do—from the stagnant liquid that has collected not so very far from where I sit; well! a traveller must be philosophic when a nation will insist upon being insanitary. It is time to get on to Carpentras.

From the wall of the promenade—part of the old feudal wall of the ancient city of Carpentras—I am enjoying a study in greys. The grim old Ventoux, dark and mysterious as in the morning, crowned with gloomy clouds and wrapped in shadow, takes the evening light among the mist-wreaths on its shoulders, where the streaks of winter snow still cling. I did well to come here, for the surroundings are attractive, and the town itself is quaint, picturesque, and full of movement; so much so that I enjoy wandering in its streets, although none can tell me where is to be found the Roman triumphal arch that is the *raison d'être* of my visit.

At last I decide to address a bronzed and wrinkled old lady who is keeping guard over two great baskets of oranges beneath the weather-beaten arches of the market-place.

“The Arc de Triomphe—I have never heard of it; Monsieur must mean the Theatre at Orange.” “Madame, I have just come from the Theatre at Orange.” “Monsieur must then mean the Porte d’Orange here at Carpentras, which is very old.” “Madame, I have just passed through the Porte d’Orange at Carpentras, which is indeed old, but not quite old enough to be Roman”—’tis an early fourteenth-century battlemented gateway.

“In that case, Monsieur, we will ask these ladies here.” We ask them, and in a moment I am before a tribunal of white-kerchiefed old Provençales, and am invited to state my case. I do so. They leave their baskets in order to listen, and then proceed to discuss the evidence with Southern volubility. But before their words have told me, I have read the verdict in their faces. I am found guilty.

“There is no Arc de Triomphe, nor has there ever been

one. There is just the aqueduct and the Porte d'Orange. Monsieur s'est trompé."

I salute and go off, disconsolate but determined. It is there, and must be found. I ask many others, but none have



CARPENTRAS. THE PORTE D'ORANGE.

so much as heard of it, until, at last, a workman—blessed among his kind—utters the words, "Cours du Tribunal." I have the clue, and in two minutes I stand before the monument.

It is an interesting old relic, worn and weather-beaten, and needlessly damaged by the damp caused through the want of a proper circulation of air around it. It was formerly built up into the bishop's palace, and then so closely girt about by the Palais de Justice that—though they have lived long lives by its side—not a market-woman in all Carpentras has so much as heard of their city's most precious relic. It is worth searching out, though, this monument that commemorates the victory of Augustus over the mountaineers. Much smaller and less ornate than that at Orange, but, so far as one can judge, much more artistically designed, it occupies, in the matter of date as well as of elegance, a middle position between the arches of St. Rémy and Orange. The ornamentations in bas-relief, representing Gallic prisoners, male and female, with hands tied behind their backs, seems to be a favourite subject with these Græco-Roman designers.

I walked away wondering at the ignorance of the market-women. But why wonder? What are Rome and her monuments to them? Is it not their duty in life just to sit faithfully before their baskets, to pray before the Virgin's altar in the cathedral, to tend their children and their homes, to come and to go away, until, one by one, each goes away for ever, and another, nearly as old, nearly as wrinkled, nearly as bronzed, takes her place? Rome!

Musing so, I found myself in a wide avenue of plane trees, whence I could watch the light waning and the shadows deepening over the eastern hills. Strolling back through the shadowy streets, where, one by one, the window lights were shining out, as evening closed over Carpentras, there stole over my spirit that strange sensation of unsatisfied desire, of lonely hunger, that coming no man knows whence into the heart, seems ever, in the train of triple Hecate's chariot, to follow "darkness like a dream."

Or was it that I had met with Esterelle? Esterelle, the queen of the wolves, the wilds, and the steeps, the fairy weaver



NYMPHE DEESSE OU PASTOURELLE[™]
QUI DONC ES-TU FEE ESTERELLE?

of spells, who, sometimes, in the night, leaves her native mountains of the east to roam the Luberon and the desolate hills of Carpentras. She is fairer than any woman that has ever yet been kissed by mortal man. And therein lies her snare. For the too curious ones who have once seen her flitting through the pine trees, fall into delirium, and, blinded, follow her, plunged into the gorge, or clinging to the peak, towards the hoary castles of their dream.

Henceforth the world is abhorrent to them. Their life has become one long ecstasy, and if not with her, must be passed alone. That is why they follow the vision, anywhere, everywhere, through the solitude of the silent hills, so that they may come to her and win her at last, there where she floats, rosy as the dawn, with fair, streaming hair and white gauzy robe, tip-toe upon the mountain top.¹

“Nymphé, déesse ou pastourelle
Qui donc es-tu, Fée Esterelle?”²

But in the morning all is changed; joy and a practical outlook upon life come with the sun; so, at breakfast, I said in my heart, “There is no darkness but ignorance”; and I formed a resolution that the scandalous state of the townspeople in general, and more particularly of the market-women, concerning their arch of Augustus, should exist no longer; that no longer should travellers, athirst after knowledge, be haled before feminine tribunals, nor sent upon goose-chases about the town in the company of the local idiot. Rather than that, I would return to the market-place, and there proclaim publicly that the thing they know not of has been beside them these two thousand years. I will speak to these people; “There shall be pepper and vinegar in it, I warrant you.”

Rising from the table, I made for the market again. Under the arches, past the cats and dogs who are picking up a

¹ See Mistral's *Calendal*.

² *Sous les Oliviers*, U. U. Maquan.

belated breakfast in the garbage of the gutter, past an old woman—none of mine—sitting among her morning stock of apples, oranges, onions, and artichokes, waiting, waiting,



CARPENTRAS. THE PORTE DE MONTEUX.

waiting, her arms crossed, for a client; past a young widow, draped and veiled in crêpe from head to foot, but with yet a smile to spare for the dark-eyed peasant who salutes her under

the arch; past all these I come to the market-place to find it—deserted. Carpentras must remain in darkness!

Returning to my hotel, I regret, almost, my decision to leave this morning. Why not wait and tell them? Why not attend the grand bal masqué in honour of mi-carême that I see advertised in that window there: “Entrée offerte aux dames; cavaliers 0·50 centimes”? Am not I a cavalier, a knight-errant on the eternal quest?

Perhaps; but knights-errant must wander. “Va chemineau, chemine.”



CHAPTER II

IN THE CITY OF CAVAILLON

AT a distance of two miles from Carpentras, on the way to L'Isle sur Sorgues, a babbling, laughing little river flows, flashing in the golden sunlight, between two high, grassy banks by the edge of the road. My seat is the stone head of the hatchway through which a smaller, but not less sparkling, stream bubbles away from the parent source to the water-meadows, between the tall cypresses and the hedge of willow, side by side with a green grass path. I am meditatively eating apples; listening to the plash of water, watching the mirrored blue, and the sunshine dancing with the ripples. I look down the long, brown road, and see it, and the shining water, and the bright green banks, all lessening away into the distant belt of dark, blue fir trees, and a red-tiled farmhouse roof. Far off, against those firs, I can see another little patch of colour, the scarlet of a woman's skirt. A village cart rattles past me, brightly painted, and drawn by a mule who shows off well the picturesque attelage provençale that gives the beast something of the guise of a unicorn. The sound dies away into the distance. Silence again, broken only by the birds' music. It is good to sit here; to watch, to listen, to dream.

I have another reason for lingering. I want to give the roads time to dry up; for those dark cloud-wreaths that, hanging yesterday evening over Ventoux, made the mountain a nocturne in greys, broke during the night into heavy rains: and to-day, though the sun shines brightly, the roads are dark with mud.

Steps on the grass path by the stream! From the water

meadows, a man is coming towards me, slowly, deliberately—no man ever hurries in Provence—his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his corduroy trousers. He is dark, fierce of countenance and hard-mouthed as a bust of a Roman emperor. He wears a blue and white striped shirt, a dirty yellow waistcoat, a bright scarlet belt, and a broad-brimmed brown slouch hat. Two terriers run from his heels and bark furiously at the stranger, as dogs in the South always do. He smiles apologetically. He has come merely to see whether the hatchway is sufficiently closed. It is. Keeping his hands still where they were, he disappears more slowly than before, for has he not done some work to-day? But talking of work, I must get on to Cavaillon; though I should like to watch for a while longer those two children who are gathering violets on the bank.

In spite of heavy roads I enjoyed the ride to Cavaillon; it brought to my mind a fact that had temporarily escaped me. Stopping to ask my way at a cottage door, I found myself in the presence of a somewhat stern, but extremely handsome and dignified woman, whose manner and bearing, showing all the ease of a born aristocrat, reminded me that I was nearing the homes of a peasantry to whom has descended a heritage of classical beauty. That recollection filled with pleasure the next portion of my ride, until my reveries were lured into another direction, when I passed the road that turns off eastward to the fountain of Vaucluse, hidden away there, under those hills within sight of which I have been ranging this half-hour past. But I will revisit later the strange valley that the shade of Petrarch haunts; now I will but sit for a while here, upon the parapet of this bridge over the Sorgue, and watch the play of light upon those slopes, and the play of the lizards upon these stones. At my appearance a dozen of them had fled, each into his favourite cranny; and, now that I sit quite still, here are the little brown heads peeping up again—just the heads, no more—over the edge of the parapet

to see whether that human—Psst ! he is still there ! vanishment ! I had moved.

Here is L'Isle sur Sorgues, an island made pleasant with the sound of shaken waters and splashing wheels ; and all bright with sunshine, the colours of the washerwomen, and the red, white, and blue of the clothes spread everywhere upon the stones to dry. But I must push on to Cavaillon.

I have just made a discovery. It is quite unusual—even though your lunch was limited to two apples—to eat anything with your beer in Provence. A rotund, rubicund gentleman, sitting at a table near to mine in this main street at Cavaillon, and whose allure suggests that he is an authority upon these matters, heard me give the order, and explained the hostess' unconcealed surprise by remarking, "*C'est rare, manger avec la bière.*" But I am not to be dissuaded ; and while I look about me and listen, I drink and eat.

There is much to listen to. The town is sending its contingent of conscripts to military service, and celebrates the event by raising a horrible tapage ; bands playing, drums rattling, men singing—the tricolor waving everywhere. M. le Maire, in the company of several officers, passes, frock-coated, bowing like a royal prince. There is much military saluting.

Most of the noise passes with them, but I am told that the people of Cavaillon are always noisy and rather stupid. They love play, especially baccarat. "Because I take no pleasure in play," a man at L'Isle sur Sorgue once said to me, "*Ils me regardent comme une bête curieuse.*"

The cathedral of St. Véran is as dark and gloomy as the Romanesque churches of Provence usually are. That much could be seen from without ; but I could not enter at once, for the western doors were flung wide, and in the porch was gathered a motley company of men, women, and children, all grouped around a coffin—a child's coffin, painted white and covered in white gauze and flowers—that rested upon two stools.

Before it, facing the eastern altar, stood a priest robed in

white and black, holding up a golden cross; and at the other end, facing the porch, stood two priests chanting prayers for the dead. All the bystanders held lighted tapers that shed a lurid, flickering glow upon the faces of priests and peasants, and seemed to throw into deeper gloom the great body of the church. The women wept, the men looked on impassively, as did a fat fox-terrier bitch in the front rank of the spectators. The elder of the chanting priests took a censer from a brazen stand and swung it to and fro over the coffin. He replaced it and handed to the nearer relations of the dead child sticks of incense that they, in their turn, waved over the coffin, until fragrant clouds curled up, to be lost in the shadows of the vaulting. The white bitch crept forward and sniffed timidly at the coffin, then, appalled by her daring, slunk away up the church, her tail between her legs. Now there was waiting outside, in the little place, a shabby hearse to which was harnessed one skinny, brown horse. The parents laid the coffin in it; the audience swarmed out and stood around in groups. Then all the children, of whom there had been many in the church, were marshalled by two of the elder girls into a procession that, preceded by the priest holding the gilt cross, moved away in double file from the little square, and turned down the boulevard, under the double row of plane trees, followed by the elder children, then by the adults, and, last of all, by the other two priests walking before the hearse. As they disappeared the chant rose again. Thus they deal with the dead children of Cavaillon.

I returned to the gloomy church that was still heavy with incense, but deserted now, except by three women praying in the lady chapel, and two young girls who are chattering in whispers near the great altar. I passed out into the beautiful little eleventh-century cloister, one of the most charming, as it is one of the smallest, that I have seen; so shady, cool, and quiet; the decayed Romanesque capitals, and the simplicity of design, revealing the grey burden of years in a way that the

church itself, made hideous with tawdry, modern decorations, can never suggest; and showing a delightful contrast between the grey shadows on the time-worn stone, and the cool, fresh greens that are springing up in the little cloister garden. I heard the sound of approaching footsteps. A woman, bent, withered, palsied—old, almost, as the cloisters, one would have said—tottered by me in the shadow, muttering to herself. I turned to watch her as she passed through the pointed door, out into the sunlit street. There will be another funeral soon in Cavailon.

Cloisters are the most alluring of all “haunts of ancient peace.” Gracious visions and hallowed dreams come to you in the shadow of the vaulting; among the strange birds and beasts, the weird reptiles, the winged angels, the virgins and prophets, the stricken martyrs and gentle Christs, who, wreathed about with clinging foliage, have looked down for so many centuries from their capitals.

How good it is to let one’s glance, “with gazing fed,” pass between the twisted columns to the sunlight-dappled garden, where the fountain’s diamond drops return with a delicious splash to their flower-rimmed pool.

Now the silent walks echo softly the sandalled tread of those who sought peace here—when elsewhere no peace was to be found in a land drenched in blood and loud with the clash of battle. There rises the ghost of one who seems to have been never of this world, so dreamily intense is the gaze of the mystic eyes bent upon the cold, grey flag-stones.

Here is a priest of another type. His features are coarser, harder; his eyes have the scrutinising, critical look of the man of the world—face and bearing reveal both joy and dissatisfaction. He bears the imprint of a man of action; sets one wondering what strange turn of fortune’s wheel doomed him to the monastic life. Yet those conflicting emotions, apparent in mouth and eyes, tell of the discovery of his true bent; of



the foreknowledge that, ere long, the hand now holding the rosary so limply will stiffen upon the sword-hilt.

There is another; red, round, fat, and cheery; one whom nought but Southern insouciance and indolence sent to the service of a God who asks for the whole man. He eats well, sleeps well, too; dreaming of the fat carp in the pool, of the venison he allows others to hunt. For him 'tis a good world; though, on Fridays, a thin one.

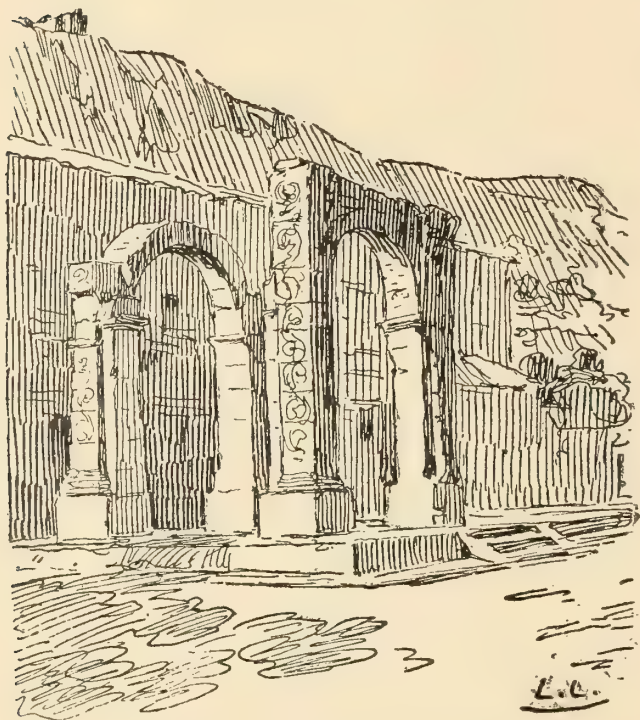
Beside him walks a little shrunken friar, dark, scowling under bushy eyebrows, through small, furtive eyes. He is sour because Pacificus will always shirk his fair share of work when the cells have to be cleaned—and his envious heart is hot against his brother. "G-r-r-r; you swine."

A patch of scarlet came with the cardinal.

The light in the boulevard is dazzling after the cloister shade. High above me, seen through the ghostly branches of the plane trees, the hermitage of St. Jacques stands out against the sky. Passing beneath the plane trees I come to the little Roman portico that once supported a stone pyramid, the earliest form of Roman triumphal monument. The pyramid has disappeared; but the four carved Corinthian columns that held it, and the cornice above them, still remain.

I leave the town and make straight for St. Rémy, reaching it just as darkness closes over the village. The day's ride has been a good one, through a landscape made significant by colour, by the many-hued clothes the women were washing in the Sorgue, by the blue of the stream itself; by the gay garments of the field-workers and of the children at play in the streets; by the greens, browns, and greys of crops and soil; and, last and best of all, by the purple splendour that fell, with the evening sun, upon the rugged crags of the Alpines, and by a frieze of processional cypresses seen against a flaming, crimson sky. How significant all this colour is, and must be always, to us who live such grey and colourless lives

in the smoky north; how it meets, at the same time, our æsthetic and religious needs; for, as Ruskin says, colour is the symbol of His love who gives us its token in the hues of the morning and of the evening, as He gives us, day by day, our daily bread.



CAVAILLON. THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH.

CHAPTER III

THE MAIDS OF ST. RÉMY

WHEN last I was in Provence—travelling from Aigues Mortes to Nîmes—a heavily-built, red-faced farmer entered my compartment and, settling himself cosily in his corner, gave me “le bon jour”; after which, being prone to sociability, as the Provençals often are, he began to speak to me of the country and of some of its noted men. He told me how, in days gone by, he had sat, many a time, opposite to Frédéric Mistral and Alphonse Daudet when they were lunching together at the Hôtel du Nord at Arles, and how he had forgotten to eat, so enthralled had he been by their conversation and by the music of their Provençal speech. “So beautifully spoken,” said he, “that you, Monsieur,”—with a touch of Southern compliment and exaggeration,—“would have understood three-quarters of it. Ah, ce Mistral, c’est un bon homme, et ce Daudet, quel esprit charmant, mais sentimental et nerveux. Oh! nerveux comme une femme.”

The talk turned from the men to the women. I spoke of the proverbial Greek beauty of the women of Arles.

“Ah, yes, the women of Arles are beautiful; but you English, who come to Provence for a few days, speak always of the women of Arles; and only a few of you—those who know their way about—are wiser. They go, one Sunday morning in the spring, to the church at St. Rémy, and there they wait at the foot of the steps until the girls come out from mass, and then, ah! Sapristi!” The voice deepened, the large, red face became purple, he sat upright, and as he talked stretched out both arms towards the embraces of a phantom maid.

"Ça vous prend le cœur, ça vous prend le cœur." Susceptible always to beauty, and inspired by his enthusiasm, I registered then a mental vow that one day I, too, would see what was to be seen outside the church of St. Rémy. This morning I set forth.

'Tis the first time that I have seen the street in daylight, for I rode into the village after nightfall yesterday. The sun



shines warmly—the butterflies will be on the wing to-day. I was quite eager and expectant; nor had I long to wait. Before ever I drew near the church—before I knew even where the church might be—I saw, coming towards me up the street, between the bright cottages and the grey *platanes*, a graceful, black-robed figure of a woman, coiffée à l'Arlésienne. As she drew near I felt almost anxious lest I should be the victim of another traveller's tale; but no! here was beauty truly blent, the very thing, the type. There was lightness of tread, grace of outline, the oval face, the straight nose, the softly rounded chin, the dark, deep, Southern eyes, the firm mouth, slightly smiling, the brunette skin, the little black Arlesian ribbon with a touch of white in it, setting off the dark hair that is parted in the middle and looped up upon

the crown of the head. There, too, were dress and manner to correspond. The white, v-shaped, voluptuously-opened corsage, a certain dignity of bearing and a gentle pride of gracious expression that revealed noble birth; all this modestly-conscious possession of a glorious heritage of two thousand years of beauty witnessed that I had heard the truth, "Ça vous prend le cœur, ça vous prend le cœur"—I had seen one of the maids of St. Rémy.

The woman passed me, and I turned to watch her as she

joined a group of prosaically-clad persons who were standing—oh heavens!—beside a motor-car! After an exchange of greetings, the lady of St. Rémy—she was no peasant woman—entered the car and was whirled off to church. I sighed. It had come to this, then. The world is darker for me henceforth.

Directed by the tolling off the bell, I followed—upon my feet. I had hoped to find that the church itself formed a setting worthy of the jewels, but in that I was disappointed. The building is modern, or nearly so, with a classical Ionic portico approached by a flight of steps. Before it is a wide *place* in which groups of men in their Sunday clothes were lounging, showing no interest whatever either in church or worshippers. Many children were entering the building and women also, mostly in couples, some wearing the local costume, and some in the ordinary bourgeoisie dress. Since there lacked yet half an hour to the time of the service, I joined the ranks of the loungers, and, catching the infection of laziness—moreover the breeze was fresh—thrust my hands into my pockets, and watched.



The scene became more animated, the Arlesian costumes more numerous. Most of the women wore bright dresses and shawls of all softest colours; some embroidered, some boldly striped, some showing check patterns; and yet, in this land of light, the colours never clashed, but blended as flowers will when nature throws them together in a summer meadow—'tis only in the grey lands that you must be careful of tone and tint.

And the faces above the shawls! They were all more or less striking, some of them very beautiful. I noticed that, in most cases, the more classically handsome the woman, the more strictly did she adhere in every detail to the correct national costume; one noticed, too, the easier grace, the greater dignity with which those who had not sold their

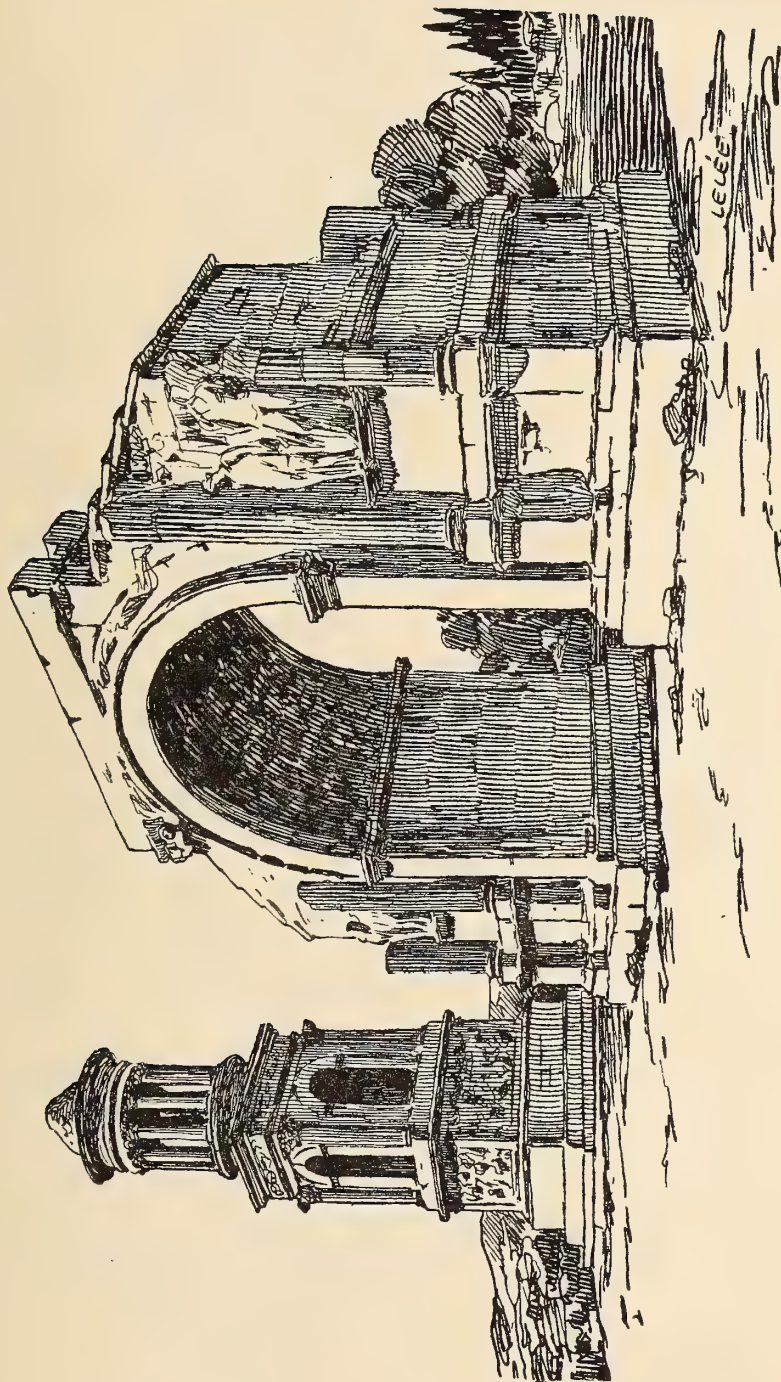
birthrights acknowledged greetings, whether from their own or from the other sex. One, in particular, I noticed, who, dressed in pale blue, and wearing a fringed blue shawl of deeper tint, held herself with a royal hauteur, and moved and walked like a queen. She was not more beautiful than the lady of the motor-car, nor differently so, but prouder, less gracious, less happy. She did not enter the church, but walked on alone down the street, and as she passed me, I saw, or imagined that I saw, in that glorious face, a certain wistfulness, a certain haughty sorrow, as though the girl, looking round upon the modernity all about her, upon the motor-car, upon the bourgeoisie costumes, upon the general bastardisation of the country's heritage, had realised more fully than her companions the transience of all human things.



Here are two more of them, bright-eyed, alert; each walking with her lover. These two are very free with their glances—*Tant soi peu coquettes*—for in these matters a Provençale is more intense even than are other Southern women; and I have heard it said that no girl hereabouts is content with one lover if she can get three; though, for the matter of that, I doubt whether this failing is peculiar to the maids of St. Rémy.

To judge from their behaviour in church on that Sunday morning, I should say that these pretty Provençales are not particularly religious. They kneel little, talk much, and are only spasmodically devotional; but in their excuse let it be urged that it must be difficult to take interest in a service in which the priests play so dominant a part. For all that, "there are decencies, mesdemoiselles." You are no longer children.

Now that I am upon the subject, I must notice a beauty of a very different type whom I saw taking coffee outside the hotel in company with three men, one of whom—husband?



ST. RÉMY. THE ROMAN MONUMENTS.

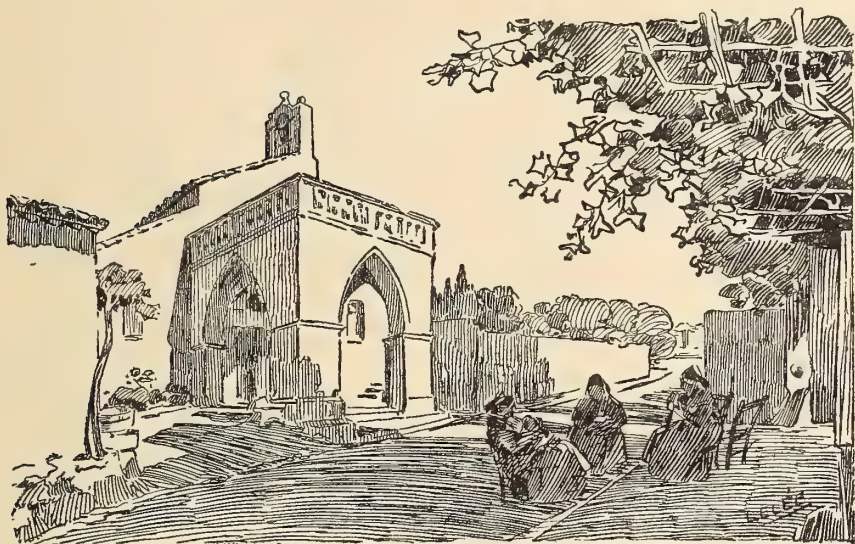
fiancé? lover? I do not know—was signalled out for her favour. From what part of the country she came, I did not discover; but I believe her to have been French, despite a suggestion of the Italian in her outline. She was of the Renaissance rather than of the classical type, with a certain Luini-like tenderness in her smile; though the tints of both face and dress—the latter a beautifully-harmonised study in grey, black, and white—and the wistful desire of the shadowy eyes, suggested the work and character of Andrea del Sarto, rather than that of the gentle follower of Leonardo. She, too, was a coquette; very much the coquette with the man she affected, leaning often upon his shoulder, whispering little nothings into his ear, and pulling it sometimes. Coquette! well, I, too, should be one were I a Luini-del Sarto woman, and a study in black and grey!

Women of Provence! swift in love, fierce in hate, fickle in both; proud, passionate daughters of the South, who have borne faithfully, through two thousand years, your Grecian heritage of beauty; homage to you! and may you hold your trust sacred for ever!

But it is not in the flesh alone that the spirits of ancient Greece and Rome still haunt St. Rémy. This afternoon I walked up to the little plateau on the slope of the Alpines, to look at the monument and triumphal arch that Julius Cæsar erected in memory of the great victory that his uncle Marius gained over the barbarians, away eastward upon the plain, by the Mount Saint Victoire.

Having been accustomed, when at school, to loathe the Latin prose authors generally; having also acquired an early and very unreasonable dislike of Julius Cæsar—ever since learning that he had taken the liberty of conquering our native land—and having been, moreover, from my early days, an enthusiastic admirer of the masterpiece in which Shakespeare belittles the character of a man of genius, I have always found it difficult to understand the greatness of that Roman. But

standing now before the monument that he raised, I realise more than I have yet been able to do, the quality of the man who wielded so wide a sway over the then civilised world. As works of art, these two relics—more especially the earlier monument—are to me, with the exception of the theatre at Arles, the most graceful and appealing remains that Rome has left in Provence. Both are very elegant in design, and



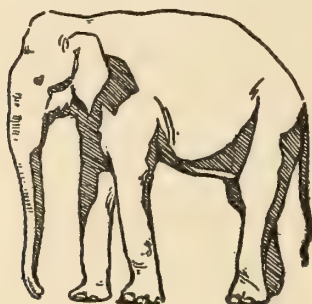
ST. RÉMY. CHURCH OF NÔTRE DAME DE PIÉTÉ.

perfect in proportion; exquisitely decorated, wonderfully well preserved, and mellowed into that gracious, golden softness the secret of which all the ancient stones of Provence seem to have learned from the centuries. Roman though they are, and by reason of their historical association, powerfully suggestive of the might of the Roman Empire, these monuments are nevertheless completely and exquisitely Greek in inspiration and feeling; and as I look from the whole to the details—on the arch the figure of Julius Cæsar, the weeping Gallia, the arm

trophies and the garlands of flowers; on the monument the carved frieze of marine monsters, the Corinthian columns, the fighting men in relief, the figure gazing out towards the battle-field—my sense of beauty is captured and bound as securely as are the arms of the stone prisoners.

None who care for art can look without great pleasure upon these two gracious trophies that sit so proudly upon the slope of the Alpines, nor can they do so without an additional sense of satisfaction that her women are worthily carrying on in living flesh and blood the fair traditions of the stones of St. Rémy.

There is in the little town another souvenir of the remote past. The "Giant" of the Rue du Géant is no giant, but one of Hannibal's elephants, whose bones were left here when the great Carthaginian passed through St. Rémy on his march to Rome.





50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MIREILLE,
AT ARLES.

CHAPTER IV

THE POET OF MAILLANE

ON a rainy, windy afternoon, strong gusts were tossing the roadside foliage, and grey masses of fleecy cloud were being driven across the sky, as I rode towards the little village of Maillane, over the fertile plain that lies between the Alpines and the Montagnettes.

Arrived at the village, I made inquiry of the first passer-by, and was directed to a little grey house standing back from the road. Through the large iron gates I entered the front garden planted with shrubs. As I reached the building a woman looked out from one of the windows and requested me to go round to the back. I did so, accompanied by two black dogs

who jumped and barked round me in their exuberant Provençal way. On reaching the back of the house, which—perhaps because it looks upon the open country and the south—appears to be held in higher esteem than backs usually are; a door opened, and there stood before me a man rather above medium height, strongly built, whose well-marked features and massive head, with high, dome-shaped forehead, framed in white hair, revealed, at a glance, strength of will and intellect; while the humour in the eyes, and the kindly lines of the mouth—not concealed by the white moustache and pointed beard—also told their tale.

Monsieur Frédéric Mistral—for this was he—received me very courteously, and asked me to follow him into his study or library; a large room, containing a well-filled, glass-fronted bookcase, and littered with volumes, papers, and letters, all lying about in the pleasant disorder that makes them doubly alluring to many to whom literature is life.

We began to talk upon local subjects; the country, its writers, its monuments, its women; and M. Mistral spoke also of the museum which he had founded at Arles, devoting thereto money which came to him as the winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1906.¹ He hopes soon to have his collection housed more worthily than it is at present, in an ancient building that he wishes to restore for that purpose.

“If Mr. Pierpoint Morgan, or any one else, will send me the money”—the poet’s eye twinkled—“I will place his bust upon my restored façade.”

We passed into the salon, a room containing some statuettes, a plaster cast of Mireille, and two oil-paintings of the poet—one of them showing him as the “Roi du Soleil,” robed in a Japanese mantle. My host took from the table a book upon the cover of which was a portrait of Colonel Cody, “Buffalo Bill.” It might well have passed for his own portrait, so close

¹ In that year the Nobel prize for literature was divided between M. Mistral and Echegaray, the Spanish dramatist.



Réduction de l'affiche de la Représentation de MIREILLE aux ARÈNES.

(direction artistique A. SAUGEY)
à l'occasion des Fêtes du CINQUANTENAIRE de MIREILLE à ARLES, 1909.

was the similarity between the two men—a similarity that extended even to the loose tie and the soft wide-brimmed hat that my host usually wears. Then Monsieur Mistral told me this story, which I give, as nearly as I can remember it, in his own words.

“One morning, many years ago, I was walking in the country here with my wife, when suddenly a black dog ran up and began to fawn upon me and to run round me, barking in an ecstasy of joy, as though he had recovered a long-lost master. So far as I am aware, I had never seen the animal before, but, since he persisted in following me, I took him home, and for ten years from that time he was my constant companion. I soon discovered that he was an animal endowed with a quite unusual degree of intelligence. One evening, soon after his coming, my wife and I went to lay some flowers upon the grave of my parents; and the dog accompanied us.



So far as I know, he had never been to the spot before, but he went on ahead of us, as though aware of the way, and when we arrived there we found him sitting beside my father's grave, which, by some subtle power, stronger even than instinct, he had singled out from some three hundred others. From that moment I conceived the idea that the dog might possibly be the incarnate spirit of some ancestor of mine; and to this day I believe that he was sent to protect me from an evil that was threatening me during those years.

“Well, a year or two after I had owned him, I had occasion to go to Paris, where I met the man whose portrait you see

there—Buffalo Bill.¹ The extraordinary resemblance between us that at once we noticed, brought a thought to my mind, and, during my conversation with him, I related the story of my dog. He made a few inquiries, and then ejaculated, ‘I can solve the mystery. A year or two since, at the very time when you found my dog, I had been at Marseilles with a show that I was touring through the South of France; there I lost one of my troupe of dogs. That animal, wandering in search of me, met you, and made a very curious, though very natural mistake.’

“One more story of the beast’s sagacity. He was accompanying me one day for a walk, when he was suddenly attacked very furiously by two large and fierce dogs. Recognising that his only hope of safety lay in flight, or in trickery, he jumped headlong into a stream that was flowing by the side of the road, as one so often sees them in Provence, and lay hidden in it, with only his nostrils showing above the water. His adversaries ran to the bank and growled down upon him; but, not daring to give battle in the element he had chosen, they felt themselves unequal to the occasion, and went off, leaving my dog free to reappear, dripping but safe. They were two of his descendants who welcomed you at the gate.”

Before taking leave of my host we drank together. “À Marguerite de Provence,” said M. Mistral, as he lifted his glass. It was the poetical way of toasting the *entente cordiale*, for King René’s daughter married Henry VI. of England. That is one of the touches that, even in conversation with a stranger, reveal the poet in the man.

Here is another. We were parting at the gate. I had told him—in reply to a question—that I was unmarried. He smiled, then said; “À votre âge—et c’est la fleur de la vie—vous

¹ I believe that M. Mistral and “Colonel” Cody met by chance in a restaurant. Each man recognised the other immediately as his double, and hastened to introduce himself.

aurez eu votre roman. Eh bien! voilà la poésie! Il faut se marier en prose."

Leaving him I could not but feel the greatness and the charm of one whom neither the Academy chair, nor the adulations of Paris, can lure from a simple village life in the land that he, of all living men, has best loved and best interpreted.

Riding home that evening, over the rich arable lands that stretch between Maillane and St. Rémy, by the meadows and cornfields of the Mas du Juge, his father's farm, where the poet passed his years of childhood, I pictured to myself some of the incidents of that life as he has told them to us, and there came to my mind this harvest legend, the prettiest of all that he has given to us in his memoirs. It is bien du pays.



That year almost all the wheat crops had ripened together, running the risk of being beaten down by a hail-storm, threshed by the mistral, or blighted by fog, and men that season were scarce. And so there is a farmer, a great, greedy farmer, standing with his arms crossed, uneasy, at his farmhouse door, waiting.

"No," he is saying, "I should not grumble over a crown a day, a bright crown and food, to any who would come for hire." But while he is speaking the day breaks, and here are three men making for the farmhouse, three robust harvesters; one with a fair beard, one with a white beard, and one with a black beard. With them comes the dawn making an aureole round their heads.

"Master," said the capoulié¹ (the one with the fair beard), "God give you good days: we are three men from the mountain, and we heard that you had ripe corn, quantities of it; master, if you will give us work by the day or by the task, we are ready to set about it."

"There is no hurry for my corn," says the master; "but for all that—not to refuse you work—I will give you, if you are willing, thirty sous and your keep. 'Tis quite enough, as times go."

Now the three men were God, St. Peter and St. John.

When seven o'clock draws near, the little farm-boy comes, on his white ass, to bring them their breakfast; and when he is back at the farmhouse—

"Boy," says the master, "what are the harvesters doing?"

"Master, I found them lying on the slope of the field, sharpening their scythes, but they had not cut a single blade."

When ten o'clock draws near, the little farm-boy comes, on his white ass, to bring them their lunch; and when he is back at the farmhouse—

"Boy," says the master, "what are the harvesters doing?"

"Master, I found them lying on the slope of the field, sharpening their scythes, but they had not cut a single blade."

When mid-day draws near, the little farm-boy comes, on his white ass, to bring them their dinner; and when he is back at the farmhouse—

"Boy," says the master, "what are the harvesters doing?"

¹ Capoulié—the chief or foreman.

"Master, I found them sitting on the slope of the field, sharpening their scythes, but they had not cut a single blade."

When four o'clock draws near, the little farm-boy comes, on his white ass, to bring them their tea; and when he is back at the farmhouse—

"Boy," says the master, "what are the harvesters doing?"

"Master, I found them sitting on the slope of the field, sharpening their scythes, but they had not cut a single blade."

"These," says the master, "these are of the do-nothing lot, who look for work, and pray God they may find none. For all that I must go and see."

So saying the miser comes, step by step, to his field, hides himself in a ditch, and watches his men.

But then the good God says thus to St. Peter—

"Peter, strike fire."

"I am going to, Lord," replies St. Peter.

And St. Peter draws from his vest the key of Paradise, ties round a pebble some fibres of a hollow tree, and strikes fire with the key.

Then the good God says to St. John—

"Blow, John!"

"I am going to, Lord," replies John.

And immediately St. John blows the sparks into the corn with his mouth, and a whirlwind of flame, a great cloud of smoke envelops the field from one side to the other. Soon the flame subsides, the smoke disperses, and a thousand sheaves appear, cut just as they should be, bound just as they should be, and just as they should be, piled into stacks. And that done the group put their scythes back into the sheaths and return slowly to the farmhouse for supper; and while supping—

"Master," says the chief of the harvesters, "we have finished the field . . . Where do you wish us to go harvesting to-morrow?"

"Capoulié," replies the avaricious master, "the rest of my corn—I have just taken a turn round it—is not ripe. There is your pay; I cannot employ you any more."

And then the three men, the three fine harvesters, bid the master farewell; and hoisting their sheathed scythes upon their backs, they go quietly upon their way: the good God in the middle, St. Peter on the right, St. John on the left; and the last rays of the setting sun accompany them into the far, far distance.

Next day the master rises very early and says joyously to himself, "Never mind! Yesterday I did a good day's work in going to spy on those sorcerer men; now I know as much as they."

And calling his two servants, one of whom was named John, and the other Peter, he takes them to the largest cornfield on the farm. As soon as he reaches the field the master says to Peter—

"You, Peter, strike fire."

"Master, I am going to," replies Peter.

And then Peter draws his knife from his breeches, ties to a flint some fibres of a hollow tree, and the knife strikes fire. The master says to John—

"Blow, John!"

"Master, I am about to," replies John.

And John with his mouth blows the sparks on to the corn. . . . Aie! aie! aie! tongues of flame, of wild flame, envelop the harvest; the corn takes fire, the stubble crackles, the grain is blackened; and, when the smoke disappears, the too clever farmer sees, instead of sheaves, only ashes and black dust.

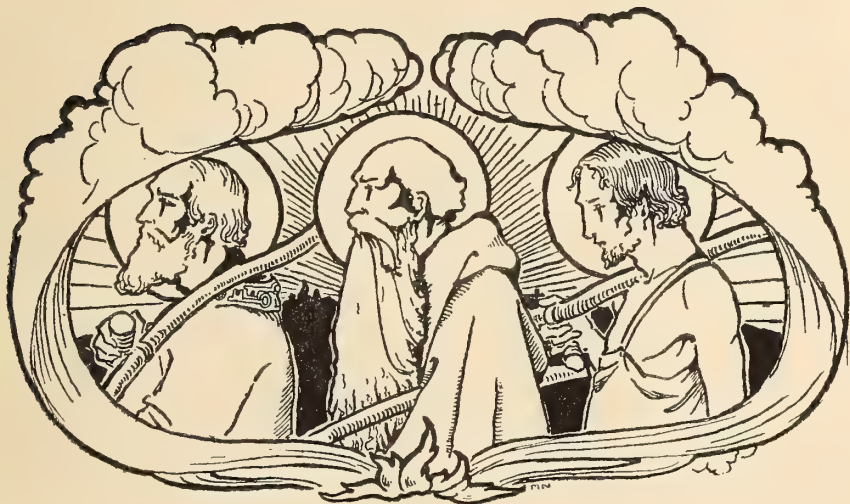
I confess that I find—and humanity will continue to find—even in an age so scientific as ours, a very potent charm and a measure of helpfulness in legends such as this. Our grown-up world cannot but look back with affection upon these

tales that she read with her infant eyes in those far-away days when,

“Crying loud for an opiate boon,
To comfort the human want
From the bosom of magical skies,”

she peopled, not Provence only, but all the Christian world, with God and with His saints incarnate.

The science of to-day, that “relentless quencher of lies”—though, whenever her ultimate supremacy is threatened, she must turn “to the legends an alien look”—can yet spare a not wholly indulgent smile for the moralities of a childish past, remembering that, though we have changed the form of our beliefs, we have never changed their substance, and that the spirit who makes mightily for righteousness still wanders, in very truth, through wider than Provençal harvests, wearing ever, for aureole about his brow, the gold of the sunset and of the dawn.





CHAPTER V

BENEATH the walls of the castle of Beaucaire I have been lying asleep, curled up on a stone bench, with the clochette of the chapel above me and the blue Rhône below; amid surroundings so romantic that waking I look about me for the fair princess whose dream-kiss had broken the spell of my slumber. But I do not see her. I see the shining, ever wandering Rhône; I see the great château of King René set off against the chain of the Alpines, all aglow in the evening sun; I see, below, the wood of Beaucaire, where, of old, all the world's richest merchandise and apparel were brought for the lords and ladies of Provence; and above, far above, the great tower of the castle where Aucassin lived. Do you know the old tale—the prettiest of all ancient love-stories that ever were said or sung,—that the nameless jongleur, wandering through fair Provence, used to tell and sing to the count and to his lords and ladies, gathered

on a summer evening round the garden steps of the castle?
Here is the story of Aucassin and Nicolette—

“Dox est li cans, liax est li dis,
Et cortois et bien asis,
Nus hom n'est si esbahis,
Tant dolans ni entrepris,
De grant mal amaladis
Se il l'oït, ne soit garis,
Et de joie resbaudis,
Tant par est douce.”¹

The Count Garin of Beaucaire was old and feeble; and he had no children, save only his one dear son Aucassin, who was young and fair and well-fashioned, but so overcome by love that he would not be knight nor take arms. When his father reproached him because he would not help to defend his land against Count Bougars of Valence, by whom it was beset, Aucassin replied that he would never go to onset nor to battle again “except you give me Nicolette, my sweet friend whom I love so much.”

But his father refused, in anger, because Nicolette was but a slave-girl from Carthage; and he went to the rich viscount who had adopted Nicolette and told him what had happened. Then the viscount shut up Nicolette in a high storey of his palace, in a chamber with a window over against the garden, and put only an old woman to keep her company. And when Aucassin heard of it he went to the viscount and threatened him, but all in vain; and so he returned sorrowfully to his

¹ “Good is the lay, sweet is the note,
Dainty too, and deftly wrought,
There is no man so distraught,
None so wretched, so foredone,
Sick with so great sickness none,
If he hear, shall not be cured,
And of gladness reassured,
So sweet it is.”

—F. W. BOURDILLON'S translation.

palace chamber, and there broke out weeping for "his sweet sister friend."

But Count Bougars had not forgotten his war; and when the assault was great and furious, Count Garin came to his son and begged of him to take arms in defence of the town. And Aucassin said, "I will take arms and go to the onset by such covenants that, if God bring me again safe and sound, you will let me see Nicolette, my sweet friend so long, till that I have spoken two words or three to her and that I have kissed her one single time." "I grant it," said the father, and Aucassin was glad, and armed himself, and rode into the battle.

And he was tall, and fair, and slim. But Aucassin thought so much upon Nicolette, his sweet friend, that he forgot what he ought to do; and his horse led him into the thick of his foes, who took him prisoner. But when he heard his enemies discussing by what death they should cause him to die, he knew that, if he would see Nicolette again, he must bestir himself; so he seized his sword and fought his way out from among his enemies, and wounded the Count Bougars, whom he brought a prisoner to his father. But when Aucassin asked for the fulfillment of his covenant, the father would not grant it. "Certes, said Aucassin, "I am very sorry when a man of your age lies," and he set his prisoner free; and Count Bougars rode back to his own people again.

But Count Garin was very angry with Aucassin his son, and put him into a deep dungeon. It was in the summer time, in the month of May, when the days are warm and long and bright, and the nights still and clear. Nicolette lay one night in her bed, and saw the moon shine bright through a window, and heard the nightingale sing in the garden; and she bethought her of Aucassin her friend, whom she loved so much. She perceived that the old woman who was with her was asleep. She got up and put on a gown of cloth of silk she had, that was very good; and she took bedclothes and towels and tied one to the other, and made a rope as long as she could,

and tied it to the pier of the window, and alighted down into the garden ; and she took her dress in one hand before and in the other behind, and kilted her, for the dew which she saw great in the grass ; and went away down the garden.

Her hair was yellow and instep small ; and her eyes grey and laughing ; and her face shapely ; and her nose high and well cut ; and her lips warmed, more than cherry or rose in summer time ; and her teeth white and small ; and her breasts were firm and heaved her dress as it had been two walnuts ; and she was slender between the flanks that in your two hands you could have clasped her ; and the blossoms of the daisies which she broke off with the toes of her feet, which lay on the narrow of her foot above, were right black against her feet and her legs, so very white was the maiden.

She came to the postern and unfastened it, and went out through the streets of Beaucaire, over against the shadow, for the moon shone very bright ; and she went on till she came to the tower where her friend was. The tower was cracked here and there, and she crouched down beside one of the pillars, and wrapped herself in her mantle, and thrust her head through a chink in the tower, which was old and ancient, and heard Aucassin within weeping and making very great sorrow, and lamenting for the sweet friend whom he loved so much. And when she had listened awhile she spoke her thought to Aucassin that for his sake she would pass to some far country, and she cut tresses from her hair and gave them to him ; and he took them and kissed them and put them in his breast.

But he dissuaded her from fleeing to another land, and Nicolette went her way into the forest to hide herself, lest Count Garin should take her and harm her ; and the very herd-boys were bewildered by her beauty. In the forest she built herself a lodge of leaves and flowers, and there dwelt ; and the cry went through all the land that Nicolette was lost.

To cheer Aucassin his father gave a great feast, but the youth was all sorrowful and downcast. Then a knight said to

him, "Aucassin, of such sickness as you have, I too have been sick. Mount on a horse and go along yon forest-side to divert you; and you will see the flowers and the herbs and hear the birds sing. Peradventure you shall hear such a bird for which you shall be better." "Sir," said Aucassin, "Grammercy! So will I do;" and he rode into the forest.

Presently he met the herd-boys, who told him how they had seen a fair maiden pass that way; and he rode on, never heeding the briars and thorns that tore him so that the blood flowed from him in forty places or thirty; and at last he came to the lodge which Nicolette had made, so pretty that prettier it could not be. The light of the moon shone within it. While he lit from his horse he thought so much of Nicolette that he fell upon a stone and put his shoulder out of its place; but he crept on his back into the lodge, and then he began to sing; and Nicolette, who was not far, heard him and came to him.

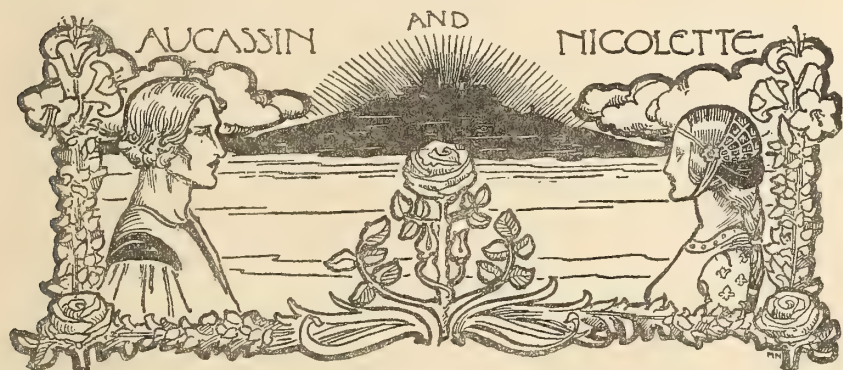
They kissed and caressed each other, and their joy was beautiful. Then she placed his shoulder into its place again, and with the lappet of her smock bound it with flowers and fresh leaves; and he mounted his horse, and taking his love in front of him they set out into the open fields.

So they rode on until they came to the sea and descried merchants sailing near the shore. And he dealt with them so that they took both into their ship. And when they were on the high sea a great storm arose and took them to the land of Torelore;¹ and Aucassin took service with the King of Torelore, but Nicolette remained in the queen's chamber. Strange adventures befell Aucassin there, and he had with him Nicolette his sweet friend whom he loved so much. But while he was in such content, a fleet of Saracens came by sea and took the castle by storm; and Aucassin and Nicolette were made prisoners and were put into different ships. And a great storm arose and Aucassin's ship drifted to the castle of Beaucaire, and

¹ St. Palaye says that "Pays de Turelure" was a common nickname for Aigues-mortes.—BOURDILLON.

so after three years Aucassin came home again and was received by the people with great joy, for his father and mother were dead. And he ruled his land in peace; but he mourned the while for Nicolette.

Now the ship in which was Nicolette was that of the King of Carthage; and when Nicolette came to the castle and saw the land about her, she recognised that she had been brought up there, and had been daughter to the King of Carthage. When the king and the people heard that, they were filled with joy and treated her royally; but Nicolette thought only by what device she might return to Aucassin.



Then she procured a viol and learned to play on it, and then she stole away by night, and darkened her face, and so, disguised as a minstrel, took ship for Provence, and came to the castle of Beaucaire, where Aucassin, with his barons around him, was sitting upon a terrace. She sang him a song of Nicolette, and Aucassin was rejoiced to hear her, and bade her, if she knew where Nicolette was, to go and bring her to him. This the minstrel promised, and away she hied to the house of the viscountess where she had lived before, and to her confessed the truth. Then she anointed herself with a plant which was called Esdain, and all her beauty returned to her. And after eight days she clad herself in rich silk stuffs and bade the lady

go for Aucassin her friend. And she did so. And when the lady came to the palace she found Aucassin weeping and lamenting for Nicolette his love, because she had delayed so long. And the lady accosted him and said—

“Aucassin, now make no more lament, but come away with me, and I will show you the thing in the world you love most, for it is Nicolette your sweet friend, who from far lands is come to seek you.”

And Aucassin was glad.

Thus ends in wedding-bells and many days of bliss the most beautiful little love-story that the twelfth century has left us. The tale is told in alternate passages of verse and prose; each verse section headed “Or se cante” (Here they sing); each prose section headed “Or dient et content et fablent” (Here they say and tell and relate). The artistic effect of the whole is greatly increased by the employment of the two methods, which are used with a very nice regard for the proper functions of each; the verse, which the reader will have observed, is assonant, not rimed, being restricted, for the most part, to passages that are either songs—such as that of Nicolette disguised as a minstrel—or that possess something of the nature of appeal, complaint, or soliloquy, that brings them naturally within the range of poetic treatment. In my short reproduction of the story, for which I am indebted to M. Bourdillon’s very graceful translation, I have, through want of space, omitted certain incidents, notably the scenes with the herd-boys and the peasant, and the burlesque episodes at Turelure. These form, one might say, the relief, the more grotesque, gothic elements in a work which, though written probably not later than the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century, has much of the daintiness of later verse and may be called a herald song of the Renaissance.

Such is the tale of Aucassin and Nicolette. I have spoken of it here in the hope that I may attract some readers who do

not know it already—and there are still too many such—to a love-song which, whether for the quaint and naive charm of its archaic language, whether for lyrical beauty, or for brilliantly rich and poetical descriptive passages in its prose portions, remains to us an unique and priceless jewel of the past.

Often I have taken the advice given by the nameless poet in the opening verse, and when out of touch for a while with the realities of a working world, have taken up the tale—or *dient et content et fablent*—and have let its magic spell bear me back for six hundred years into the dreaming past of Provence, where the summer moonlight quivers over the white castle of Beaucaire, and stripes with silver the murmuring Rhône. There, through the air still luscious with the scent of the roses, over the terraced lawns whose very daisies darken beneath her feet, I see flitting, frail as the moonbeams and fairer even than they, the gracious figure of Nicolette. And, when the dream is past, I return, with half a sigh, to the world that is; knowing well that of all the love-songs that ever were sung from the passionate south, this is the one that it were best to remember, “*tant par est douce.*”

The guardian who would show me the tower and the chapel, and what else remains of the noble castle, was nowhere to be seen. I searched for some time, and found him at last, faithless to his trust, asleep under a bush of yellow roses. By dint of relentless poking and prodding he was induced at length to rise and to shake himself into full consciousness, when we did the tour of the castle together. Walking, he awoke gradually. We looked down over the ramparts at the wood where the fair is held; and I lamented its vanished glories.

“Ah, the fair,” he said, “I remember it fifty years ago, *alors même c’était quelque chose. Diable!*”

The chapel where St. Louis is said to have worshipped is a dainty little building, but after a glance round it I left the guardian to finish his sleep, and made for Beaucaire,

though before walking down through the fir trees, I could not resist the temptation to take one more look over the parapet on to the wood below, just breaking into the first spring greens, and beyond it to the patches of colour by the river bank, where the laveuses were spreading garments to dry on the white stones that form a little natural harbour for the workers. Up here, beside the great entrance gate, it is still and sunny. An old hound is asleep beside the wall; the guardian, on a chair by the chapel door, chews the fag-end of a cigar, and will soon be as the hound is. A great silence reigns, broken only by the river splashing over the shallows. A mountain of cloud, glowing rosy in the sunset, is high over King René's castle. Slowly, very slowly, I descend.

Up there the memories of Aucassin and Nicolette proved so absorbing that I had almost forgotten Raymond VII. and the siege of Beaucaire; but here in the town it comes back to me, and I remember the vivid description of the "History of the Crusade against the Albigeois," written, perhaps, by an eye-witness.

In 1216 the castle of Beaucaire, held for Simon de Montfort by Lambert de Limoux, was being vigorously besieged by the gallant young Raymond VII. of Toulouse, who had occupied the town, which, originally made over to Simon de Montfort, had been granted by the pope to the young count as part of his inheritance. He had been well received by the townspeople, who were entirely favourable to his cause.

"Already night is coming to the shimmering sky; and the servants and the damsels, the knights themselves, have kept watch all round the castle; towards daybreak they have raised a cry, so that all the others may come forth together; and all have come forth. They begin upon the wall, the terrace, and the stairway, and never at any building did you see such noble masons; they are knights and ladies that carry the stones, damsels and wenches the faggots and the coal, each one singing ballade or verse or song."

Montfort the Terrible arrives, to endeavour to raise the



BEUCAIRE, THE CASTLE.

siege, and "all the country is resplendent with shields and lances." There is indecisive fighting in which "many a good shield is cloven or half shattered, so much blood and brains scattered about that there is no man so stupid but he is touched by it."

Those in the castle are in great distress.

"From the highest tower, with gestures of grief, they display to the Count de Montfort a black ensign. But thereupon the heralds with their trumpets go through all the tents crying, 'Let all, both small and great, take arms, and array themselves, them and their war-horses, because they of Marseilles are come with great boldness' (and very true it is that they have come). In the midst of the Rhône water the rowers are singing; the foremost, on the prow, are the pilots, the archers and the sailors are at the sails; the horns and the trumpets, the cymbals and the drums make the banks and the fields bruit and resound. The shields and the lances, the azure, the scarlet, the green and the white, the silver and gold of the armours mingle their splendour with that of the sun and the flowing stream. The combatants take the field. On all sides the leaders cry: 'Toulouse!'"

The assault of the castle is pressed home more fiercely.

"They of the town have raised against it two machines with which they so batter the capitol and the great tower that wood, stone, and lead are bent and displaced. At holy Easter they raise (against it) also the bosson, shod with iron, long, straight, sharp, that so strongly batters, rends, and smashes that the wall is injured by it, and many stones are here and there knocked down. The French, when they perceive it, are not discouraged; they make a great loop of cord that they throw with (the help of) a machine, and in which the head of the bosson is taken and held fast. Those of Beaucaire are greatly troubled thereat; but the engineer comes and sets the bosson in motion again. Then several of them of the town hide themselves in the rock, to try with sharp-pointed bars to break down

the wall. But they of the capitol, having perceived them, sow together, in a cloth, fire and sulphur and tow, that they lower along the wall on the end of a chain; and when the fire has taken and the sulphur melts, the flames and the stench so choke (those with the picks) that not one of them can longer remain there. But they go to their stone-throwing machines, and serve them so well that they smash and rend the barriers and the beams. Upon the highest tower, above the sharp battlements, the lion flag has been shaken every way and so strongly that it is on the point of being brought down. The keeper of the tower is bemoaning and cries, 'Montfort has been our undoing!' . . .

"And thereupon he shows a white cloth and a shining bottle, to signify that provisions are failing them, that they have eaten all their bread and drunk all their wine. The Count de Montfort, who has understood the signal, for vexation and sorrow has sat down upon the ground; but after he has grieved a long space, he cries aloud, 'To arms, knights!'"

All go forth to the battle. The count "enters the *mêlée* and begins the carnage, felling a great number of servants and damsels, but so great is the crowd of them of the town, that in an instant the *mêlée* grows so thick that there is no more space for great thrusts of the lance nor for single combats."

In the end Montfort's forces are driven from the field—his first defeat for many days—and the count "disarms himself under an olive tree, and his damsels and his squire take away his armour."



CHAPTER VI

TARASCON AND ITS SAINT

THE town of Tarascon is good to visit, and to wander in, for the sake of the château of King René and of the little Gothic church that holds the bones of St. Martha; but, more particularly, for the pleasant associations of legend and comedy that the very name evokes. For the Tarasconnais themselves the pleasure is limited to the legend, since they did not take in good part, and have never quite forgiven, Alphonse Daudet's delightful little exaggeration; but for us—with all due sympathy for the outraged feelings of the natives—Tartarin remains an enduring joy.

But it is chiefly for the gracious memory of St. Martha that those who love legend more than comedy—let us have each in due season—will first remember Tarascon.



THE LEGEND OF SAINT MARTHA

When the holy Maries and their companions were, by the will of God, cast upon the shore of the Mediterranean, near

to the spot where stands to-day the village of "Les Saintes Maries de la Mer," Martha was directed by her brother Lazarus to go northward towards the river Rhône. She walked for a long while, following the course of the river, her feet torn by the reeds and pebbles of the way; and, for relief from her sufferings, she looked down always at the cross which she held sometimes before her, sometimes pressed close to her breast.

Coming, one evening, upon a dreary plain, she saw, far off, a wild growth of sombre woodland. The crimson sun was disappearing behind the black boughs, and Martha seemed to hear, coming thence, the sound of weeping and of groans. These mournful echoes awoke a great pity within her, and she hastened her steps towards the border of the wood.

And now there passed two shepherds, pale and emaciated, who were hastening along the path, driving before them a troop of ill-fed sheep. At the sight of the stranger, who was seeking to make her way through the thicket of stunted oak trees, one of them threw his staff before her feet, and, with a gesture of fear, seemed to invite her to retrace her steps.

But the cries became more heartrending. The saint brushed the suppliant aside and crossed the threshold of that threatening forest. White and aerial as a heavenly vision, she glided across the shadowy spaces, beneath the vaults of the giant trees, whose leaves hung motionless as though frozen with horror; along tortuous ways, beside rugged colonnades of primæval trunks. Her steps echoed down the darkening paths. Suddenly the twilight gave place to night, but still the saint walked on through the darkness, guided by the cries which rang in her ears.

And suddenly, in the utter blackness of the wood, there appeared before her a luminous cross from which, bathing Martha in its beams, there shone out a white light that revealed to her the accursed place. It was a vast glade, formed by a marsh, greenish in aspect, surrounded by stunted trees

and dead bushes that stretched out their spectral arms in fear-inspiring shapes. And, by the strange light of the miraculous cross, Martha perceived a living being, a woman, all in disarray, whose clenched hands were tearing her face, and whose eyes were shedding tears of blood.

A mother it was, whose wild clamours were waking the echoes of the forest of Nerluc, a mother who was wringing her hands as she stared into the water, gloomy and green as a pest-stricken meadow, upon whose slimy surface, instead of flowers, there floated hideous human remains.

At the sight of Martha the woman ceased from her cries. Stupefied she gazed upon this white apparition, this luminous cross that was flooding in fantastic moonlight the twisted trunks of the dead trees ; and she took into her hands the saint's tunic. Then she pointed out a ripple that showed itself in the water of the marsh, and continued her sobs and groans.

The saint fell forward in prayer ; the cross of light moved to above her head, and her face began to shine like a beautiful lily bathed in the morning's tears and gilded by the rays of the setting sun. Three times her voice invoked a name that the echoes of the forest had never before retold, and that the afflicted mother knew not as yet. She raised her right hand, armed with the rough cross that had protected her during her long journey, and, behold, from the depths of the gloomy pool, a sudden bubbling troubled the greenish water, and there emerged a monstrous head, covered with tangled hair, whence shone two phosphorescent eyes like burning embers, a body covered with scales, bristling with sharp spikes ; and the mother uttered a wild cry, the cry of a mad woman, to see, upon the dragon's back, a beautiful naked child, smiling calmly and serenely in his sleep.

The monster swam towards the bank ; and, as it passed, the breath that came from its bloody jaws blackened the water and withered the leaves that floated around it.

With the steel claws which armed its feet it clung to the

firm earth, and gazed, fear-stricken, at the luminous cross; then stretched its gigantic body at the feet of the saint. The mother had already borne off her treasure, and was fleeing towards the border of the wood, her cries of joy breaking the silence of the night.

Martha untied the cord that encircled her waist, passed it round the beast's neck, and, quite docile, it followed her more quietly than the most submissive dog. And still the heavenly beacon shone, and wherever the monster's breath had withered the branches, they were quickened into new life by its healing beams.

When Martha emerged from the forest, she saw before her an eager throng in whose midst the happy mother was holding up her child towards the heavens where the first stars were twinkling out. The dragon stopped, then fell blinded by the light of the cross which was shining with glorious brilliancy; and again Martha invoked the sacred name of the Saviour.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!!! By Thy power banish down to hell the spirit of evil dwelling within this beast, and save, by the cross, the souls that are around me."

Immediately, with a hoarse roaring, the beast stiffened as though blasted with lightning, and it stammered the awful, unknown name whose virtue had triumphed over the dragon of the forest of Nerluc.

It was thus that St. Martha slew the monster that was called the Tarasque, and brought the Christian faith to Tarascon.¹

Until recent days the Tarasque, which may still be seen by inquiring visitors, was borne every year in procession through the streets; and, even when that beast's effigy shall have vanished, we shall still have the name of the town, and the tomb in the crypt of the little church, to perpetuate both the beautiful legend of the power of the cross, and the memory

¹ *Légendes de la Ville d'Avignon*, P. Barthélémy.

of the historic fact, that once the people of Provence were delivered from a terrible scourge. For the Christian legend has a basis in history. The destroying dragon of the Rhône symbolises the barbarian horde that Marius destroyed below Mont Saint Victoire; and it is from his counsellor Martha, the Syrian prophetess, that the gracious figure of the Christian Saint has been evolved.



CHAPTER VII

THE ALPINES AND THEIR CITADEL

THE road from Tarascon to St. Rémy interested me along every foot of the way. The workers in the fields, stooping in threes over the furrows, the bronzed villagers rattling to market, the bent, white-hooded old woman knitting at her cottage gate, the sower sowing from the tail-board of the cart ; all had their tale to tell.

More than ever I am impressed by the happy blending and contrast of the colours about me. There is the dazzling whiteness of the road, the yellow of the buildings, the mottled reds of the tiled roofs, the deeper and richer red of the moist earth newly turned around the vine stocks ; the pale modulations of fawn and grey and green upon the ghostly trunks of the plane trees, the darker boughs of the twisted olives, the soft, dainty green of their leaves whose silvery undersides sparkle dancing in the wind ; the greys, yellows, and browns of the limestone rocks that are silver, and golden too, where the full light takes them ; the pale tint of Spring's first tender leaves, the bright, rich colouring of the grasses, greens that deepen and deepen, through the sombre masses of fir and pine, to the sable wall of the cypresses. In the fields are sudden patches of scarlet, orange, and blue that the women wear ; and over all the ever-changing shades and varying lights of clouded and of cloudless sky.

Then there are the brighter hues that the mountains take at sunset ; rosy glows and heliotrope, purple glories and pearly opal tints, and sometimes, on thundery days, dark bluish grey

and pitchy blackness lowering from the red-streaked breast of the storm. When you have seen all these, and the wide rivers in the valleys, and the great castles upon the hills, "Small wonder," you say, "that this is, to-day, a land of poets, as it was once of jongleurs and of troubadours."

Such were the pictures before me as I rode back that evening to St. Rémy by the Alpines; and then, as my eyes travelled



OLIVE-GATHERER.

westward from the desolate crags that hide Les Baux, to where the hills fall away into more wooded slopes, there came to my mind a story that I once read somewhere in an ancient book, and that—perhaps by some mere chance of association of ideas—I have always located in these hills. Whether or not they were the actual scene of it—and there appears to be no reason against the supposition—it was certainly in a book of Travels in Provence that I happened upon the tale. Here it is.

On one summer's day, in a year near the middle of the seventeenth century, a party of woodmen at work in the forest heard a voice that, by its agreeable though in-

articulate note, awakened the curiosity of one of their number. He made his way to the spot whence the sound came, to see what it might be, and, at a short distance, he came upon a woman, hairy from head to foot, except just beneath the eyes. Her long locks hung down below her waist, her breasts fell full and ample, and her feet were very small, no larger than those of a three-year-old child; but, because of the hair that covered them, he could not see whether or not they had toes. He stood

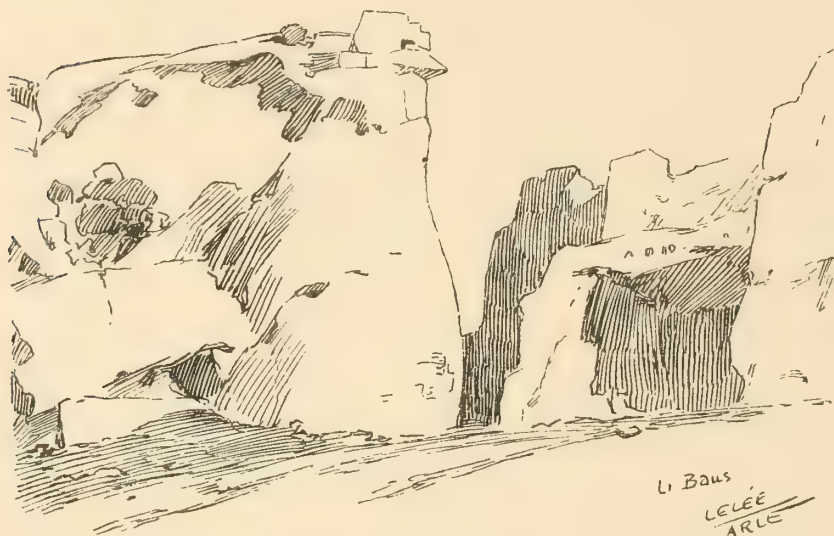
at a distance of some ten yards, watching her for half an hour or more, she showing no sign of fear the while; but he dared not approach nearer to her, and at last he became frightened and fled.

In the evening he told his adventures to his companions, and one of them, more determined than he, vowed that he would go to the wood the next day, and that, if he could find the woman, he would be a little more venturesome than his mate. He kept his word; for scarcely had he laid his axe to the first tree, when he heard the cry of the wild woman, and hastening towards the voice with another woodman who had followed him, he saw her, ran after her, and, as she fled, caught her by the hair. She uttered an inarticulate cry, and made gestures with her hands as though appealing for help. Instantly there came speeding towards her a male, who, as he ran, let fall some roots that he was holding in his hand. The woodman, seeing that his companion had already left him, was so frightened that he let go his hold. The male immediately took the female by the hand, and both had soon reached the top of the rock, three or four hundred paces away, where they were seen by both the peasants. A tuft of hair left in the hand of the man who had seized the woman, confirmed—says the writer—the story told by the first woodman, to which he added these details—that the female had “stinking breath”; that both were very short of stature, though thick-set and strong-limbed; that the hair with which they were covered was blackish with white ends; and that they had none either on the palms of their hands nor beneath their eyes.

I remember well, even now, the cauchemar that haunted me on the night after reading that story; how, in one of those accesses of abject fear that, in one's dreams, alternate so strangely with periods of dauntless courage, I was chased breathless and exhausted, by two hairy phantoms from summit to summit of those nightmare hills.

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The great wind of Provence is tearing at me, straining to lift me bodily from my seat on the guard stone by the side of the way cut through the limestone rock on this height of the Alpines: a wild, relentless wind that blew me here, almost without effort upon my part, along the road that winds up the gorge between rugged hills, clothed in dark shrubs and brightened here and there with blue flowers and golden gorse, across which one's eye ranges northward, over the plain below,



to Tarascon in the far distance and the castle of Beaucaire upon its hill.

As one ascends, the scene becomes more wild; the rocks about me piled up into shapes more strange and fantastic. They are heaped; they are hollowed, twisted, and torn. Sometimes, among the heights, the scene of utter desolation is varied by little valleys of cultivated land over whose crops huge forms of legendary beasts lie couchant. At the very summit is solitude itself. Here the rocks stand in all shapes of weirdness and distortion, in pinnacles and dolmens, in menhirs and domes

and turrets, beaten and blasted and flung about ; here like a ruined temple, there like the body of a mountain giant fallen to die in agony. The only sign of man's presence is a quarry cut in the face of the rock. Over it all a great wind howls and



LES BAUX. THE CASTLE.

rages. Southward, beyond the jagged crests of the lower rocks, I can see the plain of the Crau, dark and gloomy under cloud. Beyond it shines a bright streak ; that is the Mediterranean.

Here suddenly, at a bend in the road, is revealed to you across the gorge the airy citadel and little city perched upon its crags ; one of the most striking sights that even Provence

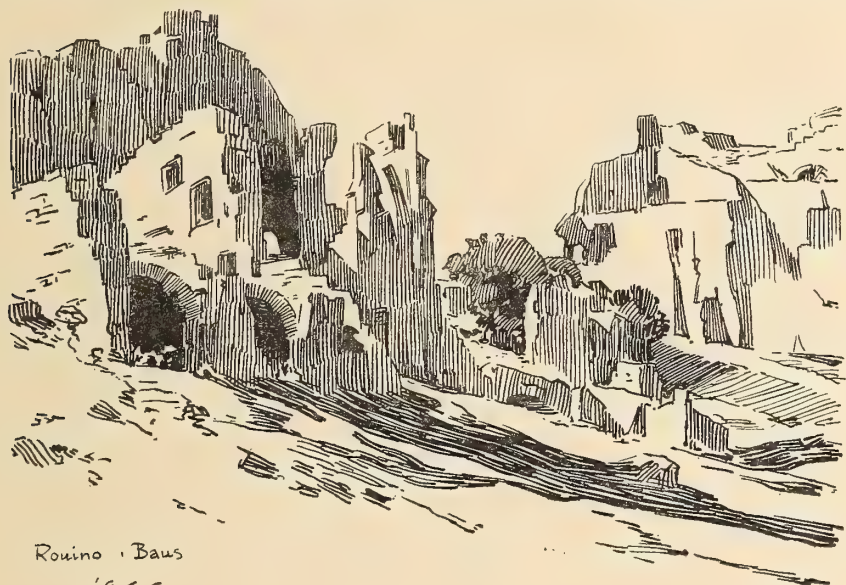
has to offer, made trebly effective by reason of its not unexpected suddenness. For just as a great dramatist will lead on his audience, lifting them gently, grade by grade, upwards, until they are upon the peaks of tragedy, and are prepared, though unconsciously, to be thrilled by one word or deed of climax ; so is the traveller along this mountain road prepared by Nature for the revelation of Les Baux. Therefore let no one with a sense of the dramatic be lured into approaching the citadel from Paradou, which is on the other side of the hills. For by so doing he will experience an anti-climax.

This is the eyrie that the Lords of Les Baux chose, the eagle's nest whence they were wont to swoop down upon the plains of Provence, adding by conquest, and sometimes by intermarriage, city after city to their possessions, until, early in the twelfth century, Raymond des Baux found himself the possessor of some eighty towns in the south of France. Of all those princes and their glories, nothing is left but this cliff-encircled, dead, and deserted city, whose requiem is howled by the wind that chills me as I wander through the scene of desolation. Amid these narrow lanes, twisting, turning, rising, falling ; now half hidden in the shadow of the rock, and now revealed in the glare of the sunlight, you come upon ruin after ruin. A Romanesque church, mediæval chapels, Renaissance palaces, standing one against another, tenantless, roofless, floorless. Here, daintily sculptured façades that totter and tremble in the wind ; there, broken steps, ruined arches, gaping cellars ; dark passages, heaped with broken stone and littered with the refuse of centuries.

Between the once noble buildings are set modern cottages, squalid and dismal, that give shelter to the few hundred inhabitants of Les Baux. Beyond the villages, upon the ground that rises to the west of the cliff, are grassy spaces that were once courtyards, and within the spurs of the rocky crest are cave-dwellings hewn in the rock, and once occupied by the Romans, as is proved by the cement that is still to be seen in patches

upon the walls. Crowning all the city below, upon the topmost pinnacle of the limestone rock, stands the still majestic ruin of the castle of the Princes of Baux, vanished lords of eighty cities, and kinsmen of almost every royal house of Europe.

Two of the great families, whose palaces are still to be seen, were the De Manvilles and "Les Porcellets"—the little pigs. A beggar one day had asked alms from a chatelaine who was



Rouino. Baus

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about to become a mother. The petition was refused, and the beggar, pointing to where a sow with a litter of nine was lying beneath a tree, prayed that the lady might bring into the world as many children as the sow had sucklings before her. The prediction was accomplished; and the family became known as the Porcellets and bore a "porceau passant" upon their arms.

Far away below us, among the cultivated patches of that little farm in the valley, I can just see the shingled dome of the dainty little pavilion in the garden where Queen Jeanne and

her maids-of-honour used to while away the summer hours five hundred years ago. The path that leads down to it from the road to Paradou passes over what was once the cemetery of Les Baux, and the villagers tell me that bones are often found there, and that sometimes a skull is turned up. Down there, upon the other fall of the cliff, southward, where the view extends away across the plain to the shining sea and the dark tower of Notre Dame de la Mer, and eastward to the Mont Sainte



LES BAUX. LE CRAU IN THE DISTANCE.

Victoire, is another curious relic of the past, the stone upon which are miraculously carved the figures of the three holy Maries.

Not knowing exactly which path leads to it through the labyrinth of rocks, I made inquiries of a pleasant-looking peasant woman who was feeding a brood of young chickens on the green patch before her cottage door. Binding a white shawl picturesquely over her head, she accompanied me willingly enough, and we descended together under an arch of rock and down the rough path strewn with stones, until, turning, I could

see before me the little chapel, and, leading down to it, the track that I must descend ; "Doucement, Monsieur, tout doucement," because it was so steep. I was to look at it long, said my guide ; it was such a grand sight. I should see the figures of the Saints carved in the rock, and the chapel, and the rings that the boat was moored to when the holy ones sailed here long ago.

Attracted by the simplicity of the woman's faith, I stayed for a few minutes talking with her before attempting the mauvais pas. She told me how she earned her bread by working, with other women of the village, at the olive plantations upon the slopes below.

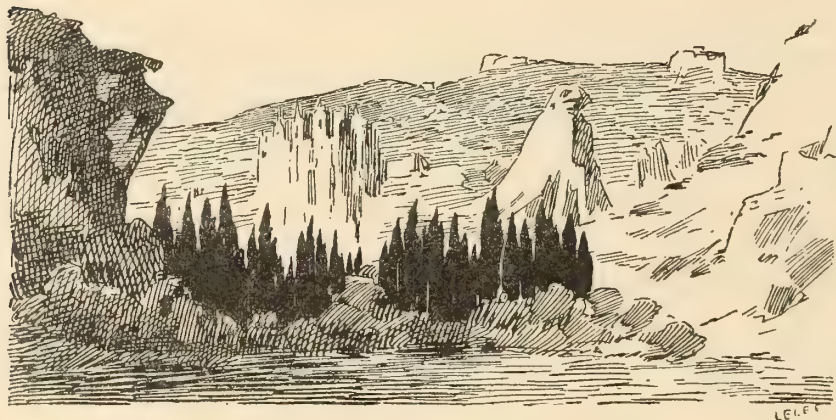
"Provence," she said plaintively, "is not a good land to live in. Good, perhaps, to visit, but not to work in ; because"—pointing down to the fields below us—"so often the floods come and destroy all your crops, except the olives ; and then, perhaps, after all your work, you find no fruit upon them—and what are you to do then?" I sympathised as practically as I was able, and went down "tout doucement" to the chapel and the carved figures



that pass here among the faithful for the "Saintes Maries." The peasants will tell you how, long ago, a pestilence broke out in Les Baux, a town till then looked upon as so wind-swept and healthy that there was none like it in all Provence for long life. So, astonished, they cast about to find a cause ; and the wiser among them remembered how the three Marys, when first they came there, had not been well received, and then it was realised that this pestilence was a visitation of God. So there was great repentance among the people ; and, further to make amends, they carved upon the great rock the figures that are called to this day "The Tremaie."

But the scientists and historians, as usual, have another explanation. They will tell you that the word "Tremaie" has no such origin, but is a corruption of "The three figures of Marius" (*Tres Marii imagines*)—that is to say, that the carvings are Roman, and a memory of Marius' great victory over the barbarians.

Looking at them, however, I must say that one of the figures is certainly that of a man; and, although I would like to believe that the three are, as the priests say they are,



Lazarus and Martha and Mary Magdalene, we must, I fear, admit that Mr. Cook is right when he identifies them as (in the centre) Martha the Syrian prophetess, with her Eastern head-dress of camel's hair, and on either side, Marius the Roman general and Julia his wife. The carvings probably commemorate the triumph of the Roman general over the barbarian army at Pourrières, and it was by a gracious and very natural transition that, in Christian days, that bloody story merged itself in the popular mind into the beautiful legend of the advent of the holy Maries into Provence, and of St. Martha's victory over the dragon in the forest of Nerluc.

Having climbed the path again, I find my friend sitting at her cottage door.

"You love Les Saintes Maries?" I ask her.

"Oh yes, Monsieur; and every year, on the 24th of May, we have a great fête; and all the misérables come here, who are too poor, or too blind, or too lame to get so far as Les Saintes Maries de la Mer. Hundreds of them come—from Arles, and from Salon, and from Maussane; and then there are healings, and many photographs are taken—c'est magnifique." For one moment I was tempted to suggest to her that the carvings on the stone were Roman rather than Christian; that the sea, two thousand years ago, was not nearly a thousand feet higher than it is to-day; that I had not seen the rings that the boat was moored to; that—but, after all, better be silent. Though she believes the thing that is not, her childish faith is nevertheless a beautiful one, and so, until she be ready for a better belief, let us leave her what she has and loves. Only education can be really helpful, and it is late to begin educating her.

A perusal of the visitors' book at the "Hotel" at Les Baux revealed to me a somewhat mysterious entry that seemed to bear remarkably upon the peasant woman's words, and upon my thoughts concerning them; though, perhaps, the writer's protest was aroused by the worship of decaying beauty that visitors lavish upon Les Baux, rather than by the ignorance and superstition of the older peasantry who still lend an ear to the legends. The words that arrested my attention were, as nearly as I can remember them, these: "The writer looks forward to a time when the advance of reason shall have put an end for ever to the reign of ignorance, and to the worship of ruin and of death, and shall have ushered in a new and glorious era—the reign of truth." Well, if truth be not here yet, it is that she has but gone to fetch her crown, and will soon be bringing it back, "doucement, tout doucement," perhaps, but with unflagging steps. Until these peasants be ready

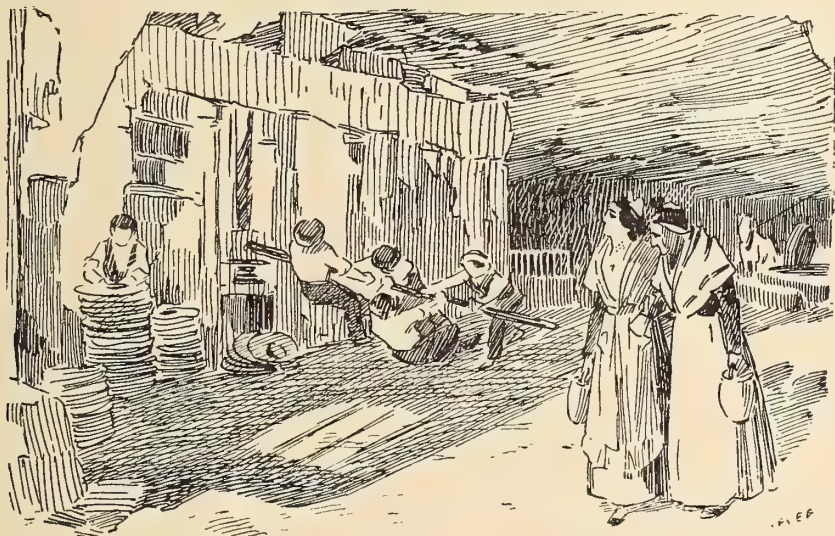
to receive her worthily, is it not well that they should, for a while, cherish their beautiful untruth? Is it not well too—if it be at us sentimental travellers that the writer of the lines was girding—that we should take pleasure in the grandeur of this place and in the memories that it evokes, even though that grandeur be fallen to ruin, and those memories be no more than a dream? Keats was not wholly wrong when he wrote: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty.”

I lingered a few moments longer at Les Baux, endeavouring to chat with Monsieur Farnier, the very intelligent guide; but our effort was not successful; for the wind, as is the way with winds in Provence, took by far too large a share in the conversation; so I left him and betook myself to the shelter of the little space on the lee side of the inn, where I leaned upon the parapet wall and looked across the Gorge d’Enfer to those tormented, fantastic rocks where, in the Trou des Fées, dwelt Taven the Sorcerer, to whom Mireille, “recommending her soul to God,” and shivering with fear as she trod that gloomy path, bore her lover to his healing.

Here a dark, hairy peasant, in his shirt sleeves, approached and leaned over the parapet beside me, smoking a pipe. He asked me whether I knew of the Trou des Fées, and pointed it out to me. He spoke of Mistral. “Il est la gloire de Provence,” he said; then—the spell of the place upon him, as it was upon me—he relapsed into silence, and two columns of smoke sailed away, side by side, into the air. My thoughts, too, drifted away, from Mistral to a greater than he; and I seemed to see, far off, seated upon a rock on the farther side of the Gorge, the spare form, “made thin for many years,” of the great Florentine, who, not improbably, conceived, amid these desolate terraces of tormented rocks, the deepening circles of his Inferno.

When I awoke from my reverie my fellow-smoker had left me, so I mounted my bicycle, and, on the wings of the wind, amid clouds of eddying dust, sped away, down the valley, towards Paradou. There passed me a cart heavily laden with

stone, the driver trudging by its side. Seeing it, I realised, for the first time, how fast the hills are disappearing. Every day more loads of stone rattle down those roads to the railways on either side of the Alpines, and day by day, before whirling gusts and falling drops, beneath torrid summer suns and rending winter frosts; stone by stone, brick by brick, tile by tile, is vanishing the city of Les Baux. And the French Government looks on, but does little to stay the work of ruin.



OLIVE MILL AT FONTVIEILLE.

My next quest was Alphonse Daudet's mill. After many recent experiences of local ignorance, I was agreeably surprised to find that every one seemed to know the way there—knowledge due, doubtless, to the fact that this author, who, as a peasant at Montmajour once expressed it to me, “was a man that liked to get himself talked of,” has impressed his peculiarities, rather than his genius, upon the people of Provence.

Be that as it may, I found the mill, easily enough, off the

main street of the village of Fontvieille, at the top of a stony, winding path where it meets the open moor.

There it was still standing; but, alas! "how fallen, how changed"; roofless, with the axle of the vanished sails rotting away in the weather, and the little front door forbiddingly nailed up. Not even the rabbits were there to show me "their little white behinds" at my approach; and I expect that, had I been able to gain an entrance, I should have found that the old, white, silent lodger on the first floor had already spread for the last time his dusty wings—"Ça ne se brosse jamais ces diables de penseurs!"—and had vanished with only a "Tu whit, Tu whoo" for farewell. Yes, there stood the old mill, another white ghost of Provence, roofless, deserted; with wild grasses growing among its platform of stone setts; and only its surroundings and its memories undecayed.

I looked round upon the scene as Daudet wrote of it in his account of the installation, "with the door thrown wide open to the good sun."

"A pretty pine wood, glistening with light, falls away to the foot of the slope. Against the horizon the crests of the Alpines are sharply defined . . . not a sound is heard. . . . Scarcely from farther and more far, the note of a fife, a curlew in the lavender, the mule bells on the road. . . . All this fair Provençal landscape lives only in the light. Je suis si bien dans mon moulin!" And now! But whist! who is this human being here where I thought myself alone? Seated upon the bank, not far from the mill, a dried-up, hard-faced, old man is bending over a stick that he whittles with a great clasp-knife. I approach him and ask a question.

"Yes, this is Daudet's mill; it has been like this ever since the miller died a year ago. Why have you come to see it?" I explain that in this mill Daudet wrote a book of stories that have given me great pleasure; and that interest and gratitude have brought me upon a little pilgrimage here. The old man smiles up at me, a doubting, sarcastic smile, full of pity for one

who can pass his time so unprofitably. He grunts, shrugs his shoulders, takes up his clasp-knife, and sets to work again upon his stick.

Having rattled back down the stony path into the village of Fontvieille, the sight of a boulangerie and the pleasant scent of new bread remind me of hunger. I enter to make a purchase. The old woman stares at me as she weighs the piece; the white baker stares at me, too, pausing with his hand on the shovel. For all that, they receive me and my halfpenny with equal politeness. I get clear of the village, and eat bread by the roadside. Within the white mill I seem to see Daudet's curly head bent over his "letters." Fortified by my purchase I make my uneasy way back to Les Baux, against the wind and the hill, and at last come again to St. Rémy, very tired, but comforting myself with the thought that to-morrow, going southward, things will be different. And they were.



CHAPTER VIII

THE VENICE OF THE MIDI

THAT morning ride towards Les Martigues will always be a pleasant memory. The cool, fresh wind lifted me, almost without effort, up from St. Rémy, past the Roman monuments, and away into the rocky heights of the Alpines; until, the summit reached, I was dropping, dropping, swiftly, silently through the lonely gorge, watching the distorted rocks as they flew past me, watching the shepherd leading his goats and sheep in single file down the rough mountain path; dropping, dropping, dropping, to the whirring sound of the wheel, under a landscape quivering with light, into the village of Maussane; and on, through Mouriès and the higher land above it, down into the desert plain of le Crau, where, as far as the eye can reach, the arid soil is littered on either side of the road with the souvenirs of Hercules' battle with the giants.

Hercules was returning one day from Iberia, where he had gone to carry off the heifers of Geryon; when, passing across the Crau, his way was barred by two giant sons of Neptune—Albion and Belgion—with whom he fought until all his arrows were spent. Then, in his distress—as is the way with men toward their gods even now—he called upon Jupiter, and behold, in a moment, the heaven was dark with a great cloud, and out of its bosom came crashing a hail of huge stones beneath which the sons of Neptune fell.

In witness of the truth of the story, those stones lie, to this day, in thousands over all the Crau. Should you prefer to do so, you may, of course, believe the scientist's tale, that in remote

ages, when the waters were upon this plain, the pebbles were deposited here by natural forces. For my part I choose the battle of the giants—'tis so much more poetical and picturesque.

The desolation of this wide waste of flatness, unbroken,



A SHEPHERD OF THE CRAU.

except by a fringe of shrivelled trees, is very impressive. Everywhere the yellow stones are lying, round, smooth, and flat; some small, some a foot or more in diameter. Here and there a flock of sheep—yellow, also, and looking like larger stones—are seen in the distance, browsing on the scanty herbage

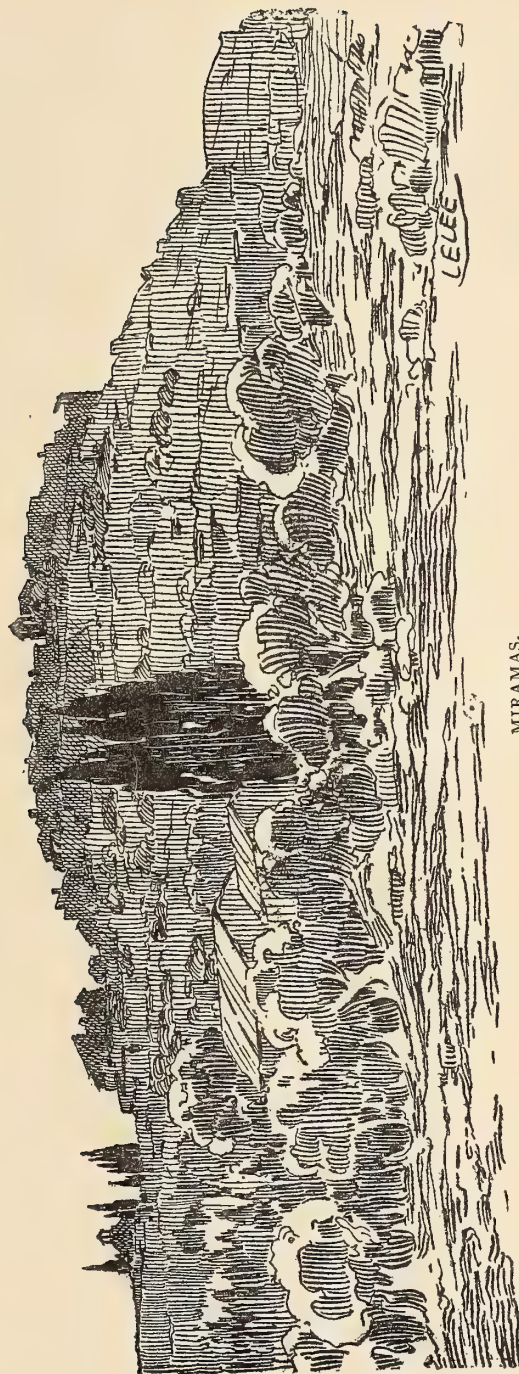
that they find by thrusting their noses under the smaller pebbles. Before me stretches the straight, dazzling road that, narrowing, vanishes at last, a white thread, upon the utter horizon.

As I pass into the open plain, I hear the mistral that has been blowing stiffly all the morning, now booming in wild gusts across the waste, and I feel myself seized and whirled onward by an irresistible force. It is the most curious physical experience of my life, this of being made one with the wind. Louder and louder sounds the roar in my ears, louder and louder the whizz of the wheels; I give up pedalling, and, sitting back, with my hand upon the brake, am flying over the road. Great dust clouds rise behind, and, sweeping along the plain, overtake me. The landscape is blotted out. I am rushing blindly, and ever faster, through a dense, white whirling cloud, seeing only the flying cart ruts below, hearing only the boom in my ears, and the whirr of wheels.

Faster, faster! Suddenly, for a moment, the wall of dust opens, showing me the long, white road ahead, and one glimpse of the stony plain around. Then it closes upon me again; again the world is swallowed up. At one moment I thought that I was being lifted from the road, machine and all, and I gripped more firmly for an aerial flight; but I kept my course and my saddle, and so, like a chosen child of the tempest, I swept over the Crau.

I covered, in two stages, 24 kilometres (15 miles) in about 35 minutes on the saddle—this almost without pedalling, and with a hand often upon the brakes.

I had read of the strength of the mistral, but had little expected that my first experience of it would be so interesting. It has blown upon me many times since then; but never again have I so realised the power of this curious phenomenon of Provence, that is at once a plague and a blessing; a blessing in this respect, that it lowers torrid summer temperatures, sweeps away fevers, malarias, and mosquitoes; and a plague in that it puts the



MIRAMAS.

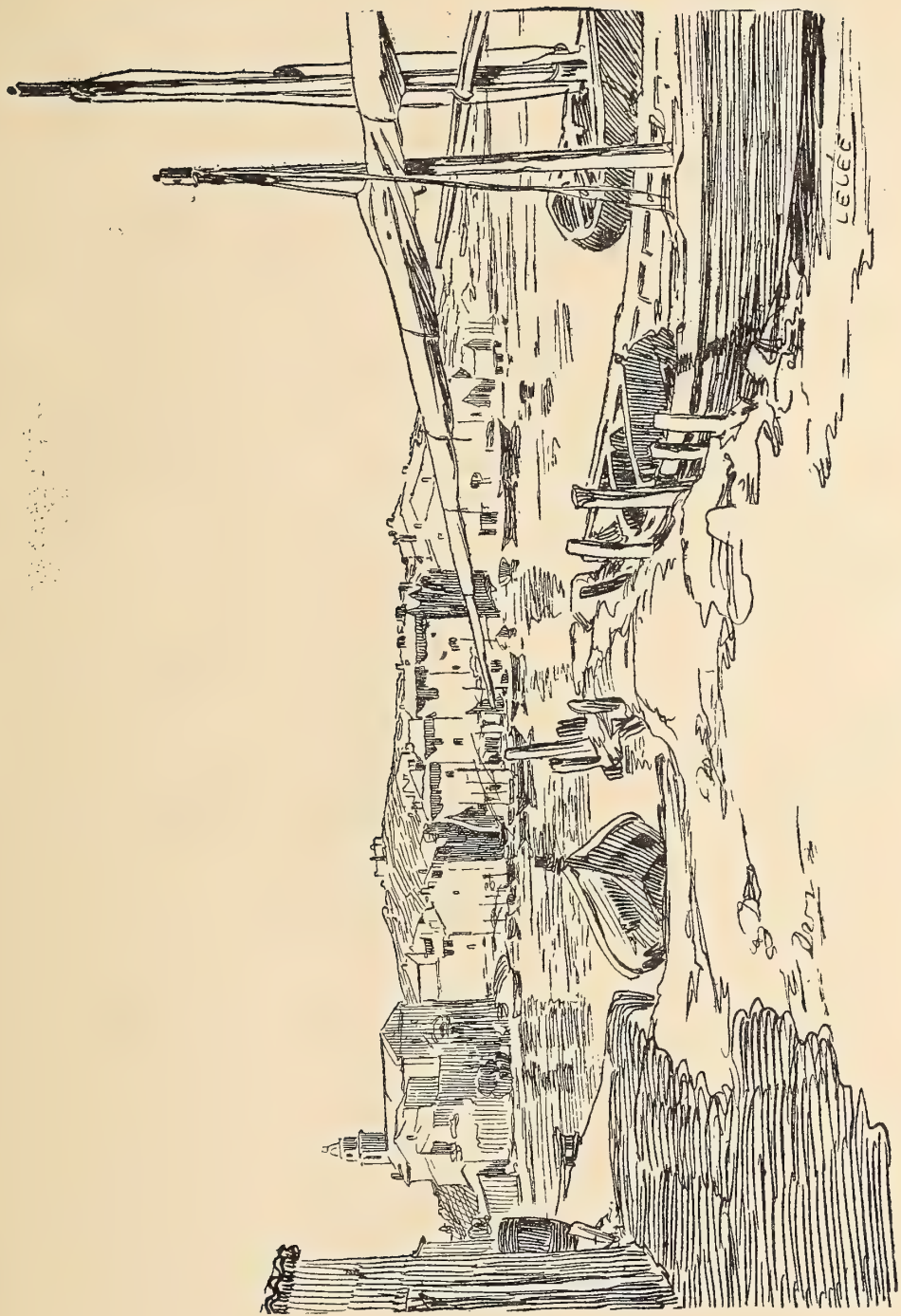
farmers to much expense and trouble in planting protecting hedges of cypress on the north side of every field, that it does enormous damage to houses and to crops, and that its relentless force and low temperature make out-of-door life often unpleasant, and sometimes almost unbearable, while it is blowing.

Some tragic stories, and some amusing ones, are told concerning the mistral; how, at Marseilles, where it often blows with great fury, carriages with their occupants, horses, coachman and all, have been blown from the quay into the waters of the "Old Port," and how children have been lifted by it and carried for long distances through the air. But an old resident of Provence told me that the incident he recalls most vividly in connection therewith is that of a great military review held upon an open plain. The long line of blue-coated soldiers, their faces set in stern determination to keep rigidly upright before the eyes of the commander-in-chief, while the wind swayed them to and fro, in waves, like standing corn on a breezy day, was, he said, one of the most ludicrous sights he had ever witnessed.

Under a cloudless sky, I flew into the little village of Entressen, where, screened more or less behind a glass framework that already had some of its panes broken by the wind, and that threatened every moment to collapse utterly, I lunched upon bread and cheese, and listened to the howling hurricane; congratulating myself the while upon the easiest cycle ride of my life, but feeling, nevertheless, superstitiously convinced that, somehow or another, sooner or later — on the way back westward, perhaps — Nature, who is not always so prodigal of her kindnesses, would succeed in cancelling my obligation. And she did.

En route again for Les Martigues. Still no pedalling is needed, though the wind has moderated and the road is more sheltered.

Soon the plain of the Crau is left behind, and the stony,



LES MARTIGUES.

desert land gives place to a wild, romantic region of hill and dale, where olive plantations alternate with clumps of shrubs and gorse. The landscape is extremely picturesque, and, with its undulations, its patches of heather and occasional glimpses of the blue water of an étang, is, for once, suggestive to me of England; of that wild, heathery district between Farnham and the Hindhead—only one must not push the comparison too far.

Now we are near the sea. Away southward the Mediterranean shines, and to the north, I come upon a glorious view of the great inland water, the Étang de Berre, lying below me, magnificently arrayed in a glory of blue and green, and set in shining limestone hills. I drop down into Les Martigues, and end there, among its canals, bridges, and narrow streets, the most interesting day's cycle ride of my life.

Perched high above Les Martigues, I am sitting upon a stone bench against the wall of the hermit's chapel, whence I look down over the olive plantation and across the little walled graveyard, where the tombstones stand, to the triple fishing town—Jonquières, the Isle, and Ferrières—whose white houses, brown and red-roofed, with their cluster of church spires, nestle round the blue band that is the harbour.

To my left, seen across a pine-clad hill, is the great Étang de Berre, over whose troubled surface the angry north wind lashes her wild, white horses.

What brought me up here? A memory, a trick of the mind, a secret thought. Suddenly the glorious sun breaks from behind a cloud. Heavens! how the splendour falls; golden over Martigues, purple over the wind-swept waters: how the white road shines upon the opposite hill! I have never seen such light as this of Provence.

Yes! a memory brought me here; a grim story of Les Martigues, that, though I read it long ago, has haunted my

memory ever since; so Provençal it was, so full of the South.¹

There was once an ancient custom among the people of Les Martigues—I do not think that it is followed now; for I asked several, and none could tell me of it. It was this. All those who had a secret sin upon their consciences—not a light fault, but a crime—would go up at night to the Crime Cross that was, and perhaps is still, down there by the graveyard below me, and throw little stones upon the heap at the foot of the cross. Every stone cast there was a prayer for forgiveness. The stones must be little ones, and yet—though every winter, when great mistrals were blowing across the Étang de Berre, some of the smallest were whittled away down the hillside—the heap was wide and high. Once in every year on All Souls' Eve, the secret sinners would go up to the Crime Cross by night.

One of those who used to go—the one who tells the story—is an old man, weary and stiff, waiting, almost eagerly, for death. There are certain words—the words of an old Provençal saying—that come often to his heart: “God keep you from the she-wolf and from your heart's deep desire.” And when they come, he drags his weary limbs up the path that leads to this chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde, where I am sitting; and then fresh stones fall upon the heap.

Years ago, he and his brother Jan had been the handsomest and strongest among the fishermen of Les Martigues; and all was going well with them, until he fell in love with Magali after she was already promised to Jan. 'Twas then that the trouble began; for Magali, being a woman and a Provençale, was not altogether content with one lover when she could

¹ “The Death Fires of Les Martigues,” by Thomas A. Janvier, in the December number of *Harper's Magazine*, 1899. The author was for several years a resident in Provence. I shall always remember the simple eulogy passed on him by a lady at St. Rémy: “We all wept when he left us.” I take this opportunity to acknowledge my great indebtedness to Mr. Janvier.

have two; and so she encouraged him, and at last fell in love with him herself, though secretly.

The boys' mother, seeing how things were going, was sad over it all; but when she warned her son, telling him of the proverb, he only kissed her, saying, with a laugh, that it was many a year since the last wolf was seen in Provence.

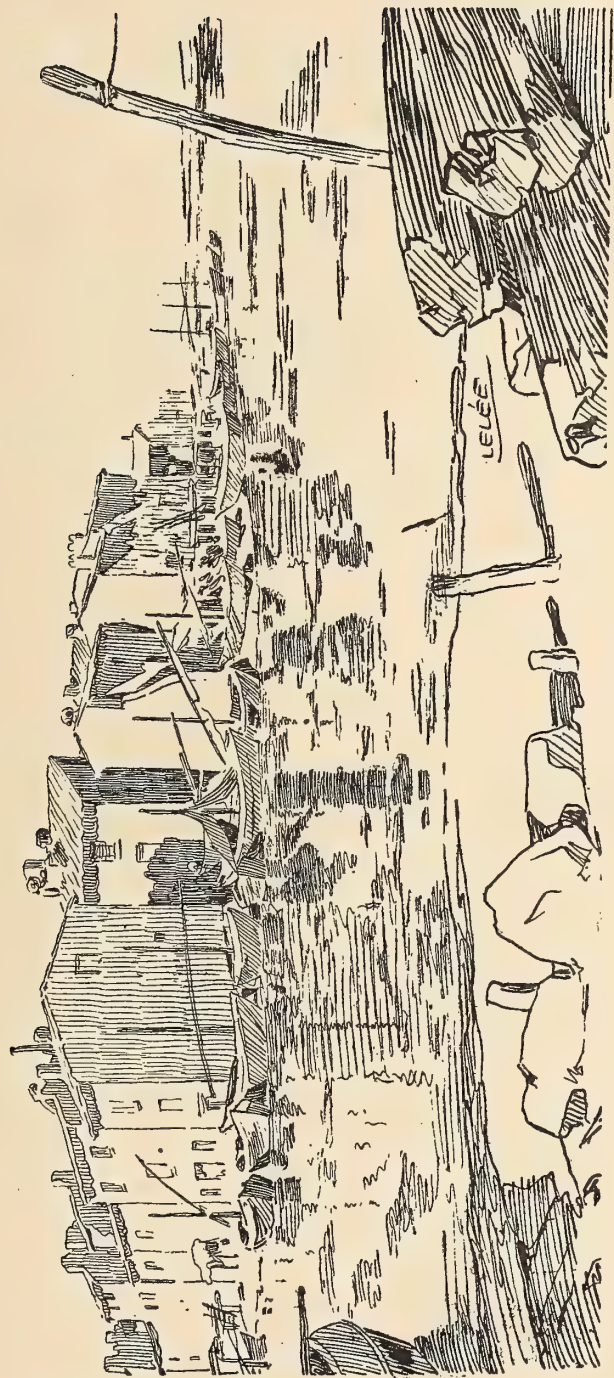
But every day his love for Magali deepened, and every day his hate towards his brother grew, until, at last, he decided to take Magali away with him somewhere in his boat, to Marseilles or to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer; because then he would be able to marry her on their return, that being a usual way of settling tangled love affairs in Provence. And so when All Souls' Eve came round, he took Magali a little way down the harbour in the boat, that she might see, from the water, the death fires twinkling out upon the hill; but, at the same time, he spread the sail and steered away for the Gulf of Fos and the open sea, over which the wind was roaring.

Then he told Magali the truth. But Jan had seen them and followed, and when he knew what they were doing he called to them to come back because of the danger. But the other was mad with love and hate, and only taunted Jan, and so the two boats passed into the tumbling, hissing water of the gulf, and the runaway, moved by a sudden impulse, and seeing that he was being overtaken—for Jan's craft was swifter than his—turned his boat's prow towards his brother's, and ran it down; and all the three were swept into the sea. When the murderer came to himself he was the only living one. Beside him the others were upcast upon the rocks, dead.

"God keep you from the she-wolf and from your heart's deep desire." Those are the words in my mind this evening as I sit by Notre Dame de la Garde.

The path back to the town is a pleasant one, winding down rough flights of stone steps, between the gorse and the olives, beside the rosemary and the wild thyme.

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LES MARTIGUES.

This is a strange sojourning place that I have lighted on; kept by a youth of sixty-five, grey-haired and white-bearded, who dresses loosely in the Italian fashion. The family and two friends of the family—a voluble, black-bearded Frenchman and a pretty Italian girl with an angel voice—dined together at a table next to mine. The company comprised, in addition to the juvenile father, an easy-going, good-natured mother, and two daughters of some seventeen and eighteen years each, dressed in light skirts and grey and white vertically striped blouses. Both wore bright yellow boots. The slimmer one was pretty, of the Provençal type, with large, dark eyes that she made the most of; the other was too plain, and perhaps too stout, to make even a glance worth while. Their conversation during the meal was lively and pleasant, and accompanied by much laughter. After dinner we adjourned to a large salon or music-room with a polished floor, and walls covered with pictures—the largest a great sea-piece by Reynaud—my host being evidently a dabbler in art. The room contained also a grand piano, a pianola, and a gramophone; while from the mantel-piece a great bust of Beethoven frowned down upon us.

Being invited cordially to assist, I smoked local cigars and drank coffee while my hosts entertained me in their typically spontaneous, light-hearted, childish, Provençal way. Heavens! how they worked at amusing themselves. They tinkled out *Rigoletto* upon the pianola, and ground songs out of the gramophone. They sped over the polished floor in waltzes, pas deux, and tarantelles; they wreathed farandoles and danced, hand in hand, in circles, until they dropped, too exhausted even to laugh any more, while the voluble friend played at leap-frog over the juvenile father's back. Then they slid, and when tired of sliding themselves, sent flying over the floor several chairs and all sorts of bric-à-brac, including the plain daughter's favourite lute, which she rescued at last, and, in imitation of the shrew of Padua, feigned to break over her father's head.

Then the father danced a pas seul "avec tant de grâce et de légèreté"—to borrow his own phrase—and they all laughed at him,—the pretty Italian with the angel voice, most merrily and musically of all,—while that grim old musician on the mantelpiece, who, as we all know, can laugh when he likes, frowned down upon us with never a smile for the easy pleasures of the South. Then, while they were all resting, the pretty daughter brought me a bunch of wild thyme that I might see how it grew in these parts, and how good the scent of it was, and how different from the rosemary I had gathered on the way home.

Childish enough, perhaps, to a Northern mind, but not unpleasant, for a while, the way of these Peter Pans who never grew up. At least I have a kindly souvenir of the evening—Rosemary, that's for remembrance.

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It is exhausting to be a child of the mistral, even for one day, but now, happily, he is back in his Northern cave, and scarcely a leaf stirs on the plane trees. In the grand cour I sit and bask idly on the balcony, my body in shadow, my knees grilled in the sunshine. Let the world be luxuriantly lazy to-day.

It is pleasant to wander about this little Venice, through the quaint, narrow streets, over the bridges, among the shipping by the harbour quays. The great Étang de Berre is so bright and blue and calm, dotted with fishing boats whose crews are casting their nets. On the other side of the bridge two of them are putting out to sea, hauling up graceful, triangular sails that fill out in the rising morning breeze. Doubled in the smooth water they glide away.

On the bridge, by my side, is a group of fishermen, blue-jerseyed, weather-beaten, discussing with usual Southern animation the prospects of a haul; there is a clatter of wheels as a donkey cart passes over, and now a pleasant carol of bells, as a flock of sheep and goats, dark, fawn, white, and dappled, come trotting, tinkling over the bridge, led by a



SAINT CHAMAS. THE PONT FLAVIEN.

grey poodle, and followed by a farouche-looking shepherd in a brown fur cap, the half of him concealed beneath a great bunch of olive boughs that he is carrying on his shoulder. The flock passes over the bridge, and swerves round on to the open space before the seventeenth-century church, whose doors stand invitingly open. The leaders of the flock disappear into the porch, and the others are following, when a snarl and rush of the poodle, and a pistol-shot crack of the shepherd's whip, send them all scurrying out again, to vanish conscience-stricken down the little side lane.

An old, old woman, in a white shawl and hood, whose black dress is covered in fish scales, totters past me, carrying two long dead eels in her trembling hands. Two sharp-prowed fishing-boats, propelled by long green oars, that pleasantly drip and splash, pass under the bridge, and up the *étang* side by side. The street is bright with coloured girls. A processional frieze of them—many in scarlet—passes before the old cathedral. A little red-robed child stops before me and stares, frankly curious to know who the stranger may be. Inspiring and delicious, there comes to me the scent of the sea.

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The evening has drawn me beside the harbour towards the sea, and there I lounge upon a grassy, flowery bank above the road by the water's side, opposite to the hermit's chapel. The sun is shining gloriously upon the little town a mile away at the head of the *étang*; the last of the white-winged fishing-boats that, since middle afternoon, have been coming home, laden, to the market, is now slipping up the narrow, blue waterway to the quay by the bridge. Below me little waves are lapping on the seaweed by the shore; on the hills across the water the fir trees are all aglow. Romance is in the air, the indescribable romance of Provence. I wish that some one would come now and tell me a sunset tale of Les Martigues; a tale like that of the death fires, with love in it, and the passion and poetry of the South.

The bright white wings of the last homeward boat flash as they pass the houses that have already lost the sun. The wings close—they are in harbour. There will be fishes sparkling on the quay.

On the verandah of the hotel the two daughters are reading. Their father appears at the window above—attracts attention by dropping his cap upon them.

“Why do you not go out, mes petites?”

“It is too hot to walk, father: you must buy us bicycles.”

“And what would she do with a bicycle—ce petit supplément là?” pointing a finger at the fat one. Le petit supplément laughed loudest of all.

“Buon giorno, Signor.” “Buon giorno, Signorina.” A tall Italian passes, under a white umbrella, followed by a great hound whom the girls run to caress. I find myself wondering who these people may be. They are certainly quite attractively Southern.

They are a Provençale family who have lived much in Italy and wish that they were back there. This much Marguerite told me when we chatted together for a moment on the verandah, while le petit supplément sat immersed in a blood-red French book, with an English title, *The Wonderful Adventures of Dick Snapper*.

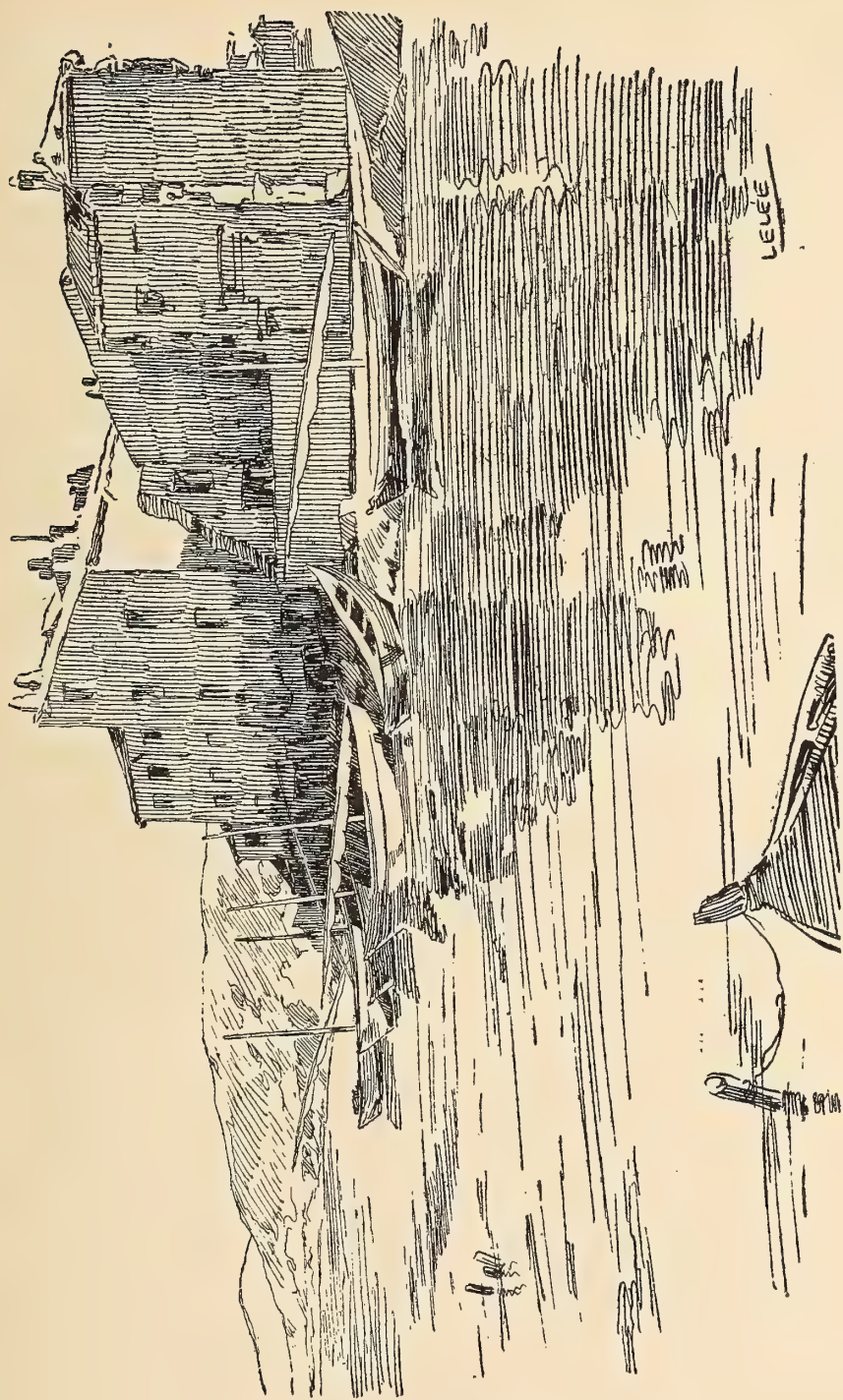
While she talked of her beloved Italy, Marguerite's voice grew troubled; the pretty head bent, and long lashes drooped over the dark eyes.

“To be cooped up, all our days, here, in Provence. It is hard, per Dios.”

Looking at her, the words of the Provençal proverb came instinctively to my mind, and I repeated them: “God keep you from the she-wolf and from your heart's deep desire.”

Marguerite stared, then smiled. “Where did you hear that?” she said. I told her.

“Ah!” she echoed, “the deep desire.” Then she looked



LES MARTIGUES.

away across the place towards Italy, perhaps instinctively, perhaps to hide the tears in her eyes.

That was my last recollection of Marguerite ; sad and merry little Marguerite, with the feet swift in the tarantella, and fingers light upon the lute. Rosemary, that's for remembrance.

Déjeuner—or rather the materials for a déjeuner—can be had cheaply in Les Martigues at the dark little Grande Epicerie, full of chattering old women who are buying pieces of cheese and half-kilogrammes of coffee. The man behind the counter is very busy, and it is, “Et après, Madame ; et après, Madame,” à n'en plus finir. But my turn comes at last ; and I leave the little shop with bulging pockets that will so remain, until I lunch, an hour hence, twenty kilometres from here, with my back propped up against an olive tree.

From the rising road to Marseilles, where it takes the hill, there is opportunity for a last look down upon Les Martigues, over the great Étang de Berre, round whose shores the shining villages are dotted. Above the roofs of the triple fishing town the church towers rise. The scene that I have just left comes back to me : the narrow streets with their smells and their dogs ; the rough population of swarthy fishermen, and women sitting over their baskets in the fish-market and by the church door ; the nets, the tackle, the open-air life on the quays ; the fresh, salt smell of the sea. On the étang the white horses are riding, white sails are slipping out from harbour ; yellow houses and red roofs reflected in the canals, and peacock blues and emerald greens upon the still surface beyond. Later come the purple and golden bars of sunset, the clatter of homeward sabots over the bridges, the lights twinkling out and doubling themselves in the shadowy waters ; a snatch of song heard from a café ; then silence and darkness, under starshine and the crescent moon.

Who could forget Les Martigues !

CHAPTER IX

MARSEILLES

SEATED in the courtyard of that "Grand Hôtel du Roulage"—in other words a roadside inn—among the patiently munching horses, beside the dogs tumbling over each other, and a little fair-haired boy tumbling over the dogs, I hardly realised how very short a distance—just a climb over those limestone hills—lay between me and the outermost suburbs of Marseilles that extend away from the heart of the town, for miles up the valleys. But, when once the descent had begun, the roughness of the road and the stream of traffic told me that the town, though as yet invisible, was near. The surroundings became sordid and grey.

How different the sensations with which one approaches by road a country city and a great town! I know few emotions more quietly stirring than to ride, for example, on a summer evening, in the twilight, over the lonely downs that surround Winchester, and then at once to drop, unaware almost of its proximity, down, down into the cathedral close; or to pass in the full spring sunshine, by the water meadows of Avon, into the silent city that has lifted before you for miles, as a guide through the valley, the most graceful of all Gothic spires.

But the approach to such a place as Marseilles! through scenes of disgust, through miles of misery; through dirt, din and rattle, through a grey uniformity of ugliness; how it depresses, how it makes one think; until at last, very gradually, and with great effort, street by street, the ways widen a little, the shops become a little brighter, better, dearer; and, standing

in the broad boulevard, you realise that this great humming, buzzing, beating town has a beauty, being, and grandeur of her own, and is proudly clothed, too, though wantonly, and with mud and blood about her skirts.

It seems curious that the two greatest names of Roman Provence—Marseilles and Narbonne—now contain no building to which we can point as an undoubted architectural relic of Roman work. I suppose it is this lack, together with the modern busy life of the place, that makes it so difficult to arouse a genuine Provençal emotion in what was once Marsalia. Nevertheless I do not regret having come here.

The waters of the old harbour carry the ships of many nations. The scene is animated and very picturesque, with the gilded dome of Notre Dame de la Garde seen on the hill, through the forest of masts, and the rigging that creaks in the wind. It is blowing hard outside, and the sea is very beautiful, so deeply blue, with great white breakers pounding and hissing to the harbour walls. The air bitterly cold.

The cathedral on the quay offers shelter. It is huge and orientally opulent, but is not attractive to me. I have not yet learned to care much for Byzantine architecture, and the use of those alternate courses of black and white marble on the exterior does not please me, though I like the red and white of the interior well enough. Moreover, I feel in this building a struggle for mastery between the horizontal and the vertical line that leaves me uncertain and unsatisfied. The effort and inspiration of a Gothic building is always upward, striving; the lines of a classical or of a Renaissance building are horizontal, restful; but here one seems to be undecided whether to soar with the one or to repose with the other.

The little church of St. Victor on the other side of the harbour pleased me much more. There is grace of outline and harmony of proportion, and the sunlight streaming softly through the little windows upon the grey-gold thirteenth-century stone. This is the church where the bones of Lazarus

lie; and many old women are before the chapels, praying so devoutly that I can but wonder what need has brought them here. As I leave the building I wish that Urban v. had not added those battlements that have made the church a castle; though, before long, I am to become accustomed to these protective measures in a world where, of old, not even the churches were safe.

Notre Dame de la Garde attracts more by reason of its delightful name and by the certainty of a prospect from it, than by any special merit. The building is modern Byzantine.

How lyrically alluring are these French uses of the name of Christ's mother—"Notre Dame de la Garde," "Notre Dame des Victoires," "Notre Dame de la Mer." Their harmonies ring so melodiously in one's memory that, speaking from the æsthetic point of view, I cannot but regret that it is impossible for us so to dedicate our English churches. Despite the loss in translation, how much better in the mouth than St. Peter or St. John is "Our Lady of Victories," or "Our Lady of the Sea."

The view from Notre Dame de la Garde is very beautiful—the great city shining beneath, with the mountains for a throne and the bluest of all seas for a footstool. How the south wind blustered up there on the heights, and set all the waves below rejoicing!

"Calm chained her, storm released her,
And storm's glad voice was he;
South Wester or North Easter,
Your winds rejoice the sea."

I had heard often of bouillabaisse: in Parisian restaurants, in advertisements of local hotels, in Mistral's "L'Isclò d'Or."

"Lou boui-abaisso marsihes
Doutour, es un manja requiste."¹

So, greatly daring, and in ignorance, I ordered it for dinner.

¹ The bouillabaisse of Marseilles, Doctor, is an exquisite dish.

At that meal, however, it did not appear, and inquiry of the waiter elicited the excuse that the dish was "lourd," and rather to be eaten at déjeuner. Therefore I have dined lightly to-night, saying, with Sir Hugh Evans, in that hopeful prospect of better things, with which suffering humanity has buoyed itself up these centuries past, "I will make an end of my dinner; there's pippins and cheese to come."

I may as well here confess that the famous Provençal dish did not appeal to me as a "manger exquis." A lobster and something else upon a dish; and, accompanying it, in a vessel that was a compromise between sauce-boat and soup-tureen, many islands of bread floating in a lake of yellow gravy. I have not ordered bouillabaisse again. It is best to leave one's ideals unrealised.

Even to sit idly in a café of the Midi is tiring, such a babel do its frequenters create. These Marseillais are loud and fierce. That little rubicund man, in the round hat, much too small for him, playing piquet with three others, is becoming quite frantic. Judging by the tapage and his frantic shouts of "Je n'ai rien, je n'ai rien," one would suppose that he has just been cheated of his last penny by persons against whom he has nourished, secretly and for many years, a deep hatred, to which he is now, at last, giving vent. Not at all. All the four are the best of friends, and would not dream of cheating one another. This outbreak is merely his comment upon the run of luck and the mild criticisms of his companions. It is just "le tempérament méridional."

And who, then, lurking under his brown slouch hat, is the little withered, scrubby-bearded, grey gnome in the corner; he whose ferret eyes look round so cunningly upon the world? I ask a friendly disposed neighbour.

"Ça c'est un maître chanteur" (a blackmailer). "What he is writing now is perhaps l'invitation à la valse."

Next to me is a happy family—father, mother, two sons and a child—who have turned the key upon their appartement

and—free from domestic worries—are here for an evening over the magazines and a draught-board. The youngest, following the destructive instincts that children possess in common with the lower animals, is climbing about the tables rending anything within his reach, and momentarily threatening his own existence. Next to them, an enormously fat man—ruddy, double-chinned, close-cropped, with a forelock low over his forehead—is dining, sweating, shrugging, gesticulating, and shouting, all at once, and over nothing at all. Something in his animalism recalls to me the descriptions one has read of Dr. Johnson feeding.

Altogether, looking round upon this strange life of the cafés, so foreign to ours, I find myself repelled by much coarseness and want of refinement, and yet attracted by its bonhomie, its insouciance, and by a certain element of ease and gracefulness in the intercourse of these people. I like the carelessly natural manner in which the hand is offered—not necessarily the right hand nor the left, but whichever, being nearest, may be given with least trouble. That woman in white, who has just entered, does not lay hand in hand at all, but just allows her fingers to lie for a moment lightly upon the man's wrist; a familiarity so naturally and prettily done that here it is only pleasing. Whereas in England!

It is nearly always true that the familiarity with which one is greeted in this country is not of the offensive order. Only once have I had occasion to snub one of the natives; a man who, because he had acquired a few words of English, thought that he was bound, in season and out of season, to inflict them upon representatives of our nation. For that sole purpose he awoke me from sleep in a railway carriage—and who would endure that unruffled?

To a man with any imagination—and, perhaps, even to a man without any—Château d'If is hardly, for its own sake, worthy of a visit under modern conditions. Nevertheless I

went there to-day ; and though the pleasure of the trip was somewhat spoiled by too many trippers and too aggressive a guide, my trouble was in some sort repaid by the memories of the Count of Monte Cristo that haunt those prisons in the island rock, and by the beauties of sea and sky that even so short a trip affords.

As the little steamer put out from the "vieux port" I experienced a feeling of pleasure to think that, for the first time, I was about to move over Mediterranean water.

We passed down the harbour, among the forest of masts which move across the narrow streets of the old quarter, where strange adventures may still befall those travellers who walk there alone. We glide by the church of St. Victor, between the great forts of St. Nicholas and St. John ; and now free of the inner harbour, and ranging round the Château du Pharo, pass the Catalans, where Edmond and Mercédès were parted on the eve of their wedding. Before us, a mile out to sea, shine the little islands that we are making for. From the nearest of them the castle frowns.

The Château d'If was built, or rather begun, by Francis I., who intended it for a State prison. It was long used for that purpose, and indeed became the Bastille of the Midi. The fourteen dungeons that it contains are ranged in two storeys round a central courtyard, and over the door of each an obliging municipality has written the name of its most distinguished prisoner, Mirabeau, Philippe Egalité, The Man in the Iron Mask, and many more. In two of the lower ones, Edmond Dantes and the Abbé Faria—shadows made living by the genius of Dumas—passed their years of durance.

Creeping through these gloomy dungeons to which the light of day never penetrates, no effort of the imagination is needed to conjure up a picture of what prison life here must have been. The gusts of sea-wind, sweeping through the cells, blow out again and again the flickering candle with which I endeavour to light my path. At last I give up all effort to keep the

candle burning, and grope my way about, guided in part by the faint gleams that struggle in from the central courtyard, and in part by the walls of rock that, damp and slimy on my outstretched hands, teach me the limits of the den.

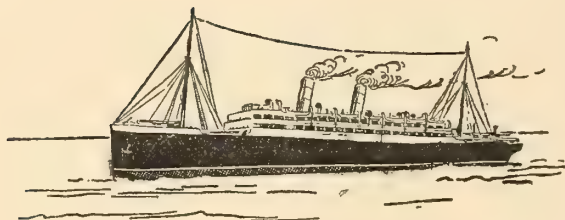
It was good to escape from the dungeons and the guide, to the light and the sea wind on the castle terrace. The water in the little rocky bay that forms the harbour of the island, is of the most beautiful peacock blue, deepening through all darker tones, to indigo, where the sea and the city meet. The darkness of the water is set off by the white lines of foam from the bows of the returning boat, and by the white wake lessening from her stern. Marseilles and its throne of hills are shrouded in great banks of pitchy storm-clouds that are breaking and falling in a misty grey veil of rain over the town. Only one shaft of sunlight strikes upon the golden figure of Notre Dame de la Garde, and fitful beams stream over the islands and the sea.

Never have I seen effects of light and cloud more glorious than those I saw that day. Later in the evening, when the storm had broken and passed away to the east; standing upon the wet deck of the little steamer, as it sped towards the town, I saw a mighty mountain of sable cloud that still hung down over the sea, and, beneath a wonderful arch of dazzling, white light that the setting sun had pierced through darkness, a great, black liner steaming majestically from the east. All too soon we were in harbour again.

Marseilles turns out to be, on the whole, a less eastern city than I had expected to find it. One sees, here and there, in the streets a fez, a turban, a Greek or Turkish zouave; but, in spite of the Byzantine influences that have produced the cathedral and Notre Dame, the town is not orientalised; and it is somewhat surprising to find that a modern church so imposingly situate as St. Vincent de Paul, at the junction of the Avenue des Capucines and the Boulevard de la Madeleine,

should have been erected in a style feebly imitative of early French Gothic.

Gladly I shall see the country again ; for I have wearied of Marseilles sooner than I usually do weary of great cities. One is too much jostled about here by hurried travellers, and importuned by hungry touts ; boys who would black your boots, beggars who whine for charity, guides, sellers of picture postcards, and all the rabble of knaves and sharpers who live by their wits. Disguise yourself as a Frenchman if you wish to live in comparative peace in Marseilles. Even so you will not be left altogether undisturbed.



CHAPTER X

AT AIX EN PROVENCE

WITH great joy I breathe again the fresh air of the hills, and lunch al fresco on a grassy bank that no flunkey—thank Heaven—has ever trod.

A flock of newly-shorn sheep, led by an old woman in a white hood, and guarded jealously by a ragged poodle, comes pattering by me, raising a cloud of dust. Two of them, moved by an irresistible curiosity, linger behind for a moment to sniff at my bicycle—it is certainly old enough to arouse legitimate antiquarian interest—until, hustled on by their guardian, who is nibbling gently at their legs, they canter off to rejoin their companions, jostling each other as though the way were crowded as the Rue de Noailles. A farm cart passes along the road. I listen dreamily to the tinkle of the bells on the team, until the music melts into silence, and I hear only the song of the larks overhead in the quivering blue.

Before me the uplands of meadow rise. It is good to be here,

“ Here, where the world is quiet,
Here where all trouble seems
Dead winds’ and spent waves’ riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams.”

The magic of those lines haunts me all the way to Aix, and in such musical mood—natural reaction from the roar of a great city to the harmonies of nature—I roll them over and over upon my tongue, until I come to the ancient capital of Provence, lying in a fertile hollow of the hills.

Aix is a city flourishing and yet dead, full of memories of the past. Some of the choicest of them will surely be in the cathedral, and it is there that I go first, by quaint and narrow little streets, across the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and under the gateway of the old sixteenth-century clock-tower, to the Gothic façade of St. Sauveur. It is not altogether happy as a whole, this façade—no more so than Gothic of the Midi usually is—and moreover these doors, of whose beauty one has heard so often, are folded back and hidden behind shutters. I enter and summon the sacristan, who proceeds to disclose his treasures.

First of all he reveals the doors, which are the most fascinating of their period that I have yet seen ; the spirit of the Gothic and Renaissance arts being here perfectly blended in the Sibyls and prophets who stand under their canopies between the carved pilasters. It is not until they are seen together that I realise how fitly the woodwork is framed in the rich fifteenth-century portal that Archbishop de Pennart began and Soqueti finished about 1500. All this lower work of the façade is very beautiful. It is only as a whole that the exterior of St. Sauveur fails.

There is the famous triptych, "Le Buisson Ardent," in which King René of Anjou and his queen Jeanne de Laval kneel upon either wing. These are authentic portraits of Provence's favourite rulers painted by Nicholas de Froment. They are typically of the Flemish school, and I am not in the least surprised to hear that the work has been attributed to Jan van Eyck. That it has been attributed also to King René himself is almost a matter of course, since the versatility of this prince, who, in Mr. Cook's phrase, was ignorant of nothing great or useful or beautiful, led to an attribution to him by a grateful people of many of the country's unacknowledged artistic achievements. Yet these two by no means exhaust the interior attractions of the cathedral. There are two more very charming primitive paintings — one of the life of St. Mitre — and tapestries, representing the temptation of Christ and the life of

the Virgin Mary, that the Englishmen carried off as booty during the Albigensian war, and took to St. Paul's in London, whence they were rescued by a Canon of Aix, and eventually housed safely here in the choir. There is a queer little Tarasque, too, to be seen in the cathedral—a not unnatural reminder in the city that is nearest to the scene of the final drama—and there

is also a charming Romanesque Baptistry and cloister with a quite unusual variety of columns, twisted, spiral and ornamented in unexpected ways. The entrance to the southern aisle is a very fine example of what may be called the transitional work from Roman to Romanesque, such as is to be seen at Notre Dame des Doms at Avignon and also at the church of Le Thor near L'Isle sur Sorgue. A portion of the wall here is supposed to have formed part of a



MEDITATION.

Roman temple to Apollo from which were taken the marble columns, with Corinthian capitals, that support the arches of the baptistery.

Although the hands of the destroyers have been so active in Aix that not a stone remains of René's palace, I feel, even in a short stay here, how strongly the city bears the impress of his time and of later times up to the grand siècle

of the Roi Soleil. The great hotels, with the stone figures supporting their balconies, the ancient deserted monasteries, here and in the country round, where once the monks were so happy that, when the time came for them to go, they could be induced to leave only by threats of blowing up their beloved homes over their heads—all these are dumbly eloquent of the past.

What shall I do to-night? I am tired and not in the mood either to read or write. I have it! This afternoon, among the anachronisms that here confront one daily, I saw, creaking beneath the sixteenth-century clock-tower in the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, a cart plastered all over with posters advertising, for this evening, at the "Music Hall Casino," an operatic performance of *Les Cloches de Corneville*. That should do very well. Travellers in a strange land must see something of all its ways, and perhaps this glimpse of how the tuneful ones of Aix while away their April evenings may charm the black mood from me.

"In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart."

So I pay two francs for a fauteuil, and find my way into a wooden building behind the boulevard. I have a front seat, a very front seat. I hope that Messieurs les Clarionets and Messieurs les Tambours will be merciful to me; but they are tuning up in a rather determined manner. A notice before me is reassuring, though: "Tous bruits et désordres seront sévèrement réprimés." I hope so.

The greater part of the stage is in front of the curtain—an arrangement charmingly suggestive of the days of René—and through a hole in it, the light shines. The hole is suddenly closed by the application thereto of a human eye; and a sense of fellow-feeling cheers me, for I, too, sometimes with a suspicion of tremor at the knees, have played Peeping Tom in those anxious moments between the dressing-room and the three

knocks. The eye disappears and the ray of light streams out once more. The hall fills with a noisy audience, who smoke, talk, and drink coffee. Every one knows every one. Those near me, in front, chaff the orchestra. "Why dont you begin?" "Because we have lost the hammer for the bells; c'est enbêtant." But a waiter brings it, and the overture is commenced. The audience drums an accompaniment; the curtain rises.

The chorus are energetic and quite presentable, with the exception of one enormously fat, treble-chinned damsel with long yellow hair and a tiny, blue, tasselled cap perched upon the top of her head. Serpolette is pretty, but she is "fluffing" a little, owing to an attack of nerves, and Gaspard—too much the bonhomme—not only lacks the miser mouth, but leaves the lion's share of his part to the prompter, whose young girl's voice is, however, musically speaking, a great improvement upon his own.

Le Bailli is excellent, playing with a real sense of comedy, and speaking his lines well; and Germaine is a pretty and modest little maid who appears to be genuinely grateful for applause, and takes her calls very gracefully. They all throw plenty of Southern enthusiasm into their work, and tackle their choruses with great gusto, especially that lilting bell song—

"Di-gue di-gue di-gue, di-gue di-gue don,
Son-ne son-ne son-ne donc joyeux carillon."

How dashing the Marquis was; and how Grenicheux had to run when the curtain fell on his head, and Gaspard, too, when, to get the furniture on to the stage, they had to raise the curtain and expose him, still in costume, in full execution of his duties as acting manager. But, after all, these little contretemps, incidental to amateur work, only added to the enjoyment and good-humour of the audience, and, when the time came for the players to ask in their chorus,

"R'gardez par ci R'gardez par là
Que dit's vous de tout cela;
Voyez ceci Voyez cela
Comment trouvez-vous cela,"

I was quite ready to answer with the others; "Messieurs et Mesdames, nous trouvons tout cela fort bien." And I told nobody around me how I had been reminded, occasionally, of Pyramus and Thisbe.

The next morning I leave Aix with the intention of going on to Salon; but, no sooner have I climbed the hill and seen Mont Saint Victoire, with the memorial cross upon its summit shining in the sun, and the city below in its nest of hills, than I seem to hear a chorus of silver bells calling me back—

"Di-gue di-gue di-gue, di-gue di-gue don,
Son-ne son-ne son-ne donc joyeux carillon,"

and, moved by a sudden impulse, I turn and ride back to Aix, to instal myself once more in the hotel that I left but half an hour ago.

The first thing that I do is to call at the library of the Hôtel de Ville, and there ask for King René's *Book of Hours*, that as yet I have seen only through the glass. After due inquiry it is given to me, but O! Monsieur le Conservateur—did I not, unless my ears deceived me, hear the word "épouvantable" when my humble request was submitted to you? That is not a pretty word, Monsieur, and the sound of it detracts something from the kindness of the loan: though I quite understand that, sometimes, ces diables de voyageurs. . . .!

King René's *Book of Hours* is the most interesting thing in the beautiful library of Aix. It bears the royal name, either because his arms are found upon it in various places, or because of the curious historical notes that have been written on the calendar, giving the important dates in connection with the second house of Anjou, or because the book was used by King René himself. The introduction to the library catalogue states that "these historical notes and royal arms, repeated several times in the manuscript, render it altogether probable that this book of hours was made for King René and was used by

him, although it is not proved that he wrote these family souvenirs with his own hand, nor that he was the author of the illuminations."

Here, for example, is a note, on page 19 of the calendar, written on the margin against the 19th day of September :

"L'an mil IIII^c LIIII, René, roy de Sicile et d'Arragon duc d'Anjou, espousa, en l'abbaye Saint Nicholas près à Angiers, madame Jehanne de Laval, fille du comte de Laval, sa seconde femme."¹

And against the date 2nd November :

"L'an mil IIII^c XXVIII nasquit Madame Yolande, première fille du Roy René, roy de Sicile et d'Arragon, duc d'Anjou, à présent contesse de Vaudemont"

There are many other fascinating manuscripts here, but I have no time to see them.

There is grateful shade beneath this fir tree on the road to Pourrières, the scene of the great battle in which Marius destroyed the barbarian army. It is desperately hot in the sun, though a cool breeze blows from the west. I am glad that, obedient to the call of the bells which some spirit must have set ringing for me yesterday, I returned to Aix to make present to me another episode of the past. For the past is still the present in Provence. If it were not so I should neither have come here in last autumn's rains, nor returned again with this spring's sunshine; but that I read in a travel book, how the Roman bridge still strode in lonely grandeur across the valley of the Gard, how the triumphal arch at Orange was triumphal still, and how, lovely as ever in its ruin, the Greek theatre at Arles raised pathetic columns upon its hill. And more than two thousand years have passed since the tramp of the Roman legions was heard at Pourrières.

¹ In the year 1454, René, king of Sicily and of Aragon duke of Anjou, married, in the abbey Saint Nicholas near Angiers, madame Jehanne de Laval, daughter of the Count of Laval, his second wife.

No, there is no past. That is the trend of all modern thought—scientific, philosophic, or religious—as it has been the trend of all thought down the centuries, from the time that there first flashed upon the mind of the ancient writer the tremendous intuition that “In the beginning God”—not a million gods, but *God*—“made the heaven and the earth.” Every day brings a fuller recognition of the truth: “One God, one law, one element”—the universe a unity indeed. There is no past and there is no future. “The curtains of Yesterday drop down, the curtains of To-morrow roll up; but Yesterday and To-morrow both *are*.”

This is a romantic spot. Around me is the fir wood stretching away behind to clothe the lower slopes of the rock ramparts that guard St. Victoire from the south. The great stony ridge is so uniformly horizontal that one can imagine Titans having raised it for the protection of their mountain stronghold. Farther east, where the slope is less precipitous, the rock takes a carpet of red earth, and patches of stunted pine trees cover it. From the middle distance tolls the bell of the village church. In front of me the white road shines, and, beyond it, across a belt of waste land covered with coarse grasses, rises a great pine wood bordered by golden gorse over which gay butterflies are flitting. On the horizon, distant mountains shine in palest blue. Four jays, scared by some animal moving in the wood, rise screaming and vanish over the tree-tops; a pair of magpies fly heavily over the road, and alight beside a patch of heather, jerking their long tails. There is silence, but for the breeze in the firs. Midday tolls from the church. I must move. It is a long way yet to Pourrières.

Eastward there is a gradual falling away of the natural fortifications that guard St. Victoire. They drop almost to the level of the valley, giving place to the rocky chain itself, which, in its turn, diminishes until it is no more than a little range of hills, on one of which is perched Pourrières, among the fields that, after the great fight, the Romans called

"Campi Putridi," so thickly were the bodies strewn over them.

I climbed up to the little village upon the hill, and lunched at the inn there, the "Grand Hôtel de Provence," whose landlady was kind and genial, but not sufficiently renseignée to be able at all to satisfy my curiosity with regard to the battle-field and its monuments. "And what about the village of Trets, near here, Madame? They tell me it is ancient. Is it worth a visit?"

"Mais oui, Monsieur, je crois bien. C'est gentil Trets; il y a un téléphone."

Dropping down through the village street, on to the battle-field again, I had before me the genial, smiling face of the fat landlady of Pourrières, and I repeated to myself, not without a certain inward joy—

"C'est gentil Trets; il y a un téléphone."

Between Pourrières and Trets, close to the main road from Aix, there are to be seen, rising some two feet from the ground, the remains of what was once a Roman memorial that is supposed to have been erected to mark the site of the graves of generals killed in the battle. While I was looking at these, a peasant who had been at work binding rushes close by upon the banks of the Arc, approached and asked me whether I knew what the monument was. We began to talk, and he told me that he had assisted personally in researches for the remains of the generals, carried out, with the sanction of the Government, by an antiquarian society of Marseilles. They had traced the foundations of the monument down to a depth of three metres, but had found no bones either around or beneath them, though relics were still being dug up in the neighbouring fields. He added—pointing to the bridge near us—that the old Roman bridge, existing at the time of the battle, was on that day choked with dead bodies, and that the river ran red with blood.

Many of the stones of the monument, he said, had been

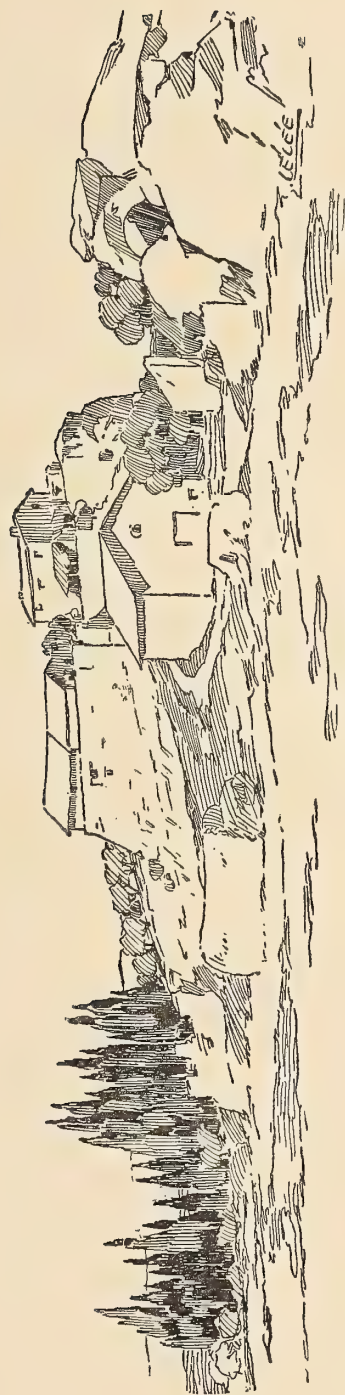
used in building the "vieille fontaine" at Pourrières, on the north side of the village; and I rode back to see it. On the way there, looking over those shining, silent fields, it was strange to realise that two thousand one hundred years ago they were loud with the tramp of the Roman legions, and that these surrounding hills were echoing the battle-cries, and the death-cries, too, of one hundred thousand doomed barbarians.

Not a man of the defeated army escaped, and it is said that after the battle three hundred thousand camp-followers and women were slain or sold in the slave-markets of the coast. "Upon an enormous pyre in the very centre of the blood-stained encampment of his enemies, Marius celebrated his victory by a holocaust of all the booty which was not divided among his soldiers or reserved for his own formal triumph. Traces of a deep layer of ashes, of melted lead and other metals, of burnt earth and calcined pottery have been lately found where this great pyre once flamed to heaven so long ago, and proclaimed the victory of Marius to all the countryside. Plutarch adds the picturesque touch that the messengers from Rome, bringing news of his fifth consulate, arrived just when Marius was lighting the pyre."¹

I found the vieille fontaine in the village easily enough. The stones have been erected in the pyramidal form which the original monument took.

How strange that out of this bloody death-struggle between the pagans and the barbarians, which delivered Provence from so great a scourge, arose the gracious Christian legend of St. Martha taming the Tarasque with her cross. In addition to that poetical myth, I do not forget another beautiful souvenir that the victory of Marius has given to this land—the triumphal arch at St. Rémy. And when even that has vanished, the memory of his triumph will still be preserved to us for ever, while the sun shines, as it has shone all this day through, upon the great mountain of "St. Victoire."

¹ Cook's *Old Provence*.

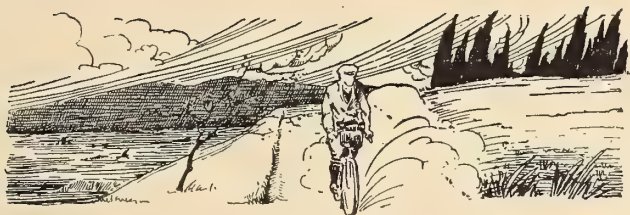


LE CASTELET, NEAR ARIES.

After all I had no time to see Trets; for when I arrived there the last train back was just starting, and since I felt quite unequal to facing the journey back to Aix against a stiff head wind, I am, to this day, ignorant of what is to be seen at the ancient village, except, of course, the sight promised me by the landlady at Pourrières.

Yes, a telephone—and the minions of the law! For it was at Trets station that, with the hideous joy with which certain foreign officials are wont to detect a breach of the regulations, a stout, uniformed little man pointed out to me that the absence of a “plaque” from my bicycle constituted a “contravention,” for which I was liable to a fine of forty francs.

Having pleaded in vain the clemency which should be extended to the stranger within their gates, I politely declined an invitation to pay the forty francs to him immediately, and so terminate the incident. In default, I was informed that, though, as a special act of grace to an *étranger*, I was to be allowed to return to Aix that night, with my bicycle, I should be called for at my hotel early next morning and haled before the tribunal presided over by M. le Sous-Directeur. All which momentous events duly happened. Monsieur le Sous-Directeur—or rather his representative—meeting my protests with the shrug, and movement of the spread hands with which, from time immemorial, Frenchmen have expressed their “regret that they are unable, etc. etc.,” invited me to “verser” twenty-five francs; giving me, at the same time, the comforting assurance that, if the higher tribunal who, at some future time, would revise the proceedings of this court, should consider the penalty imposed upon me to be excessive, they would have much pleasure in refunding to me the balance. I have not yet heard from that higher tribunal, but doubtless it is now sitting, and in the course of a post or two . . . “C’est gentil Trets; il y ne téléphone.”



CHAPTER XI

THE PEASANT POET, AND OTHER MATTERS

As I turn out of the sheltering boulevard, en route for Salon, a fierce gust of wind seizes upon me, and almost blows me from my saddle. 'Tis the mistral again, relentless as ever, and gathering strength every minute. What shall I do? It is too late, it would be too ignominious, to turn back now a second time; and yet, and yet . . . I go on with my teeth set. Luckily my way is not due north-west, for in that case the journey would be impossible.

Under the lee of a quivering bush, I eat my lunch by the side of the road, on the edge of a wide common over which the great wind booms; and later on, at St. Cannat,¹ I comfort myself with coffee in front of a little restaurant upon whose stone flags the sun is beating down with a scorching heat.

"What have we done, Monsieur le Patron, that we should be grilled alive? Why not an awning over our heads?"

"Because, Monsieur, to put up an awning before the end of April would be useless. The first great coup de mistral would send it flying down the street."

While he was speaking, we heard a rushing sound overhead, and there came down upon us a whirling cloud of dust that almost hid, for a moment, the old fountain where two women of the village were drawing water. That was a sufficient vindication of his reply. At it again, by hill and dale,

¹ St. Cannat suffered severely in the earthquake which shook Aix and the surrounding district, last year. Several fatalities occurred.

by heath and holt, winding up and sloping down, among the shaken cypresses and the rocking firs, until at last, very tired, I come into Salon. There are things to be seen here—among others the castle of Nostradamus, where that famous old philosopher died—but I am in no mood to tarry, and so take the train directly to Arles. The railway line, as it passes over the Crau, is protected by long ramparts of cypress, lest even the trains should go the way of most movables when the mistral has free play.

The next morning I experienced a decided disinclination to rise.

“Get up,” said the spirit.

“Stay where you are,” said the flesh.

“Do not give way,” said the spirit.

“Press the button,” said the flesh. I did so, and breakfasted luxuriously in bed; and the next day, and the next. On the third day I began to feel that I could drag myself about; but I registered a mental vow that never again would I face the mistral on a bicycle.

So unaccustomed are we to see a great pall of grey cloud over the sky, to watch the rain drizzling down upon the *place*, and to hear its patter upon the windows,—for all the world as though this were England,—that I feel unutterably depressed, and I observe that even the light-hearted men of the Midi seem to have lost half their elasticity of spirit. But rain or shine, ill or well, I must go over to St. Rémy to-day, to fetch baggage which has become necessary if this weather is to continue. So I take down my mackintosh from its peg and go.

It is certainly the most dismal journey that ever I made out of England. One old woman in my carriage is weeping, for no other cause, I verily believe, than the weather. I can hear her whispering sometimes, “And this is a land of sunshine—a land of sunshine!” But even sadder is the return from St. Rémy in the twilight. It is Sunday evening, and groups of dripping peasants linger about the platform of the

little wayside station, seeing off their friends from Arles and Tarascon. In the corner seat, opposite to me, is a fat, black-whiskered, middle-aged peasant in a blue blouse, with many packages on the seat beside him. A white-haired, blind old man is helped in by his grandson, and, being in a needless hurry—seeing that the railway is Provençal—sits down heavily upon the parcels. The owner tugs and coaxes them, as best he can, from beneath the blind man, throwing to me, as he does so, a comical glance of mingled amusement and concern. Muttering to himself, the blind man falls asleep.

In the other corner a handsome Italian peasant woman, also surrounded by bundles, is talking volubly to a young French soldier. The little flickering, corner lamp just reveals their figures, and throws the girl's black silhouette upon the packages on the opposite seat. From the platform comes the babble of many peasants talking together, and from the next compartment, the whine of two children asking for food. Their father gives them large pieces of bread taken from a great basket that I can just see, over the partition, upon the rack above him. He offers them "saucisson" or "chocolat"; but they want water, and he goes out, grumbling, to get it for them at the fontaine, but returns empty-handed; "L'eau ne coule plus."

"Ah, ces enfants," says an old peasant beside him—I can just see the top of his bald head—"Ça n'est jamais satisfait, toujours il manque quelque chose."

Yes, old rustic philosopher; and the grown-up children too! toujours, toujours quelque chose. But I have this consolation, and perhaps you have it too, that in so many of the greyest days of life, when the want of that indefinable quelque chose makes such a blank within us and without; in those very days when we seem to be farthest from the heart's desire, a mysterious voice comes to us, whispering, from the most secret places of our being, a message and a revelation of wonderful things.

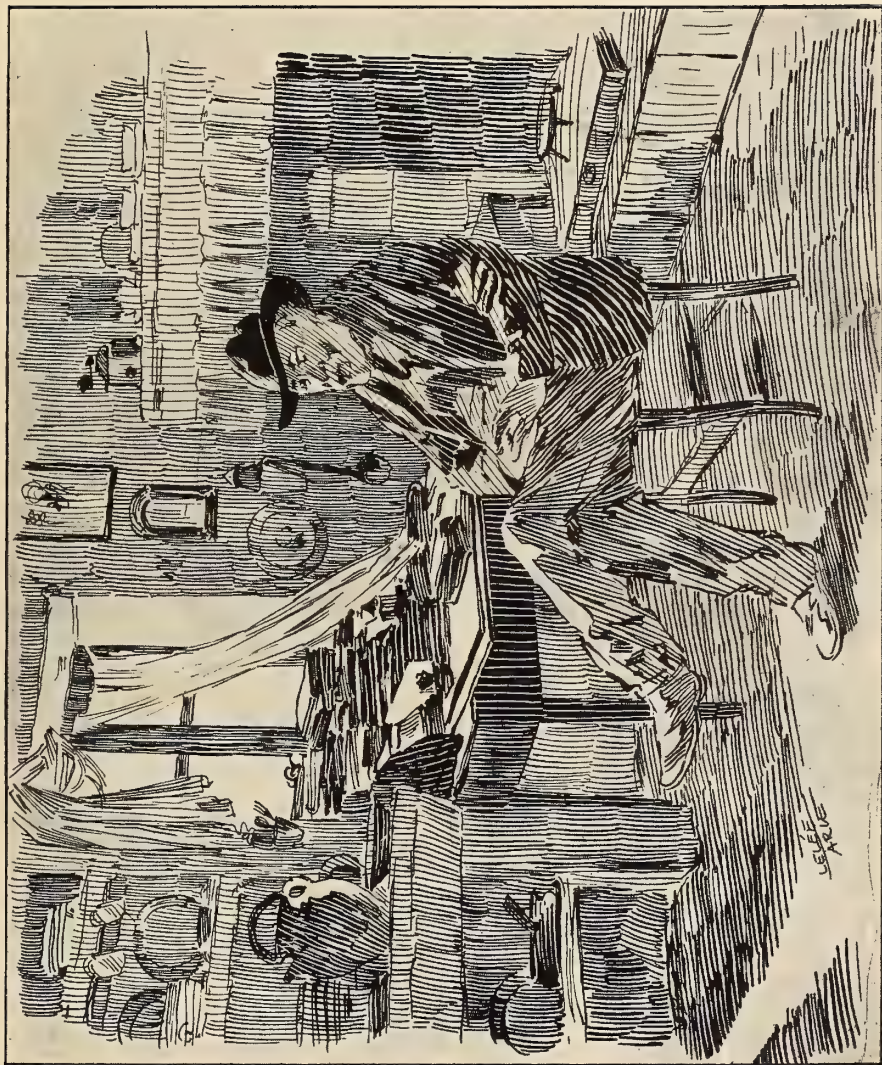
At Paradou, a little village at the foot of the Alpines, near

Les Baux, lives one who is, in Mistral's phrase, "Le seul paysan de la France qui chante sa charrue et qui la sache chanter." Yesterday I paid him a visit at his home. One of a row of little cottages was pointed out to me as being his; and a smiling old woman opened to my knock. She told me that Charloun—his name is Charloun Rieu, but every one calls him Charloun—was either at work in the fields or was at his other little house at the lower end of the village; so I went down that way and made further inquiries of a man who was trimming an olive tree in a little plantation by the side of the road.



He could not help me much—thought that Charloun might be gone "se promener" or might be at the café by the fountain. He was not at the café, so I returned, amid staring washer-women and barking dogs, to the little old woman in the white cottage. No sooner has she opened the door than the chickens—dozens of them in all stages of growth—taking her appearance for an invitation, come flocking into the house, into the sitting-room, up the stairs, everywhere. "Ah! les vilains! les vilains!" and it is only with much chivvying and shaking of skirts that they are got out again.

The old lady, still talking very volubly in a queer dialect—half Provençal, half French—that the peasants, I believe, call Franchihot, and that I cannot fully understand, ties a black handkerchief over her head, and proceeds to show me exactly where her man is to be found. "You must pass the little café, you must turn down at the grand café, and then, tout au fond, you will find him in a belle maison to the right." This time I have no difficulty. The belle maison is one of a little row of white cottages. A boy points to the door, behind which I hear the sound of men's voices. I knock; the voices cease and the



THE PEASANT POET CHARLOUN RIEU IN HIS COTTAGE AT PARADOU.

To face page 112.

door is opened by a big man with a large, massive head, and a strong, though kindly and simple face, very bronzed, with a grey moustache and a beard almost white. He wears a loose coat and waistcoat of brown corduroy, light trousers, a loose tie, and a soft, slouch hat that he does not remove during the whole of the afternoon.

Such is Charloun Rieu, the peasant félibre. His companion leaves us at once, and I am welcomed very cordially. Charloun begins to talk to me of his work. He takes from his desk a copy of his recent translation of Homer's *Odyssey*—Homer's *Odyssey* in this peasant's cottage!—which he has just done into Provençal from a literal French translation; and he reads a passage to me aloud. I realise for the first time, the rich, sonorous beauty of the language, as his full, deep voice rolls out the words. This has been his leisure work of many years, and he is proud of it.

Then we begin to talk of his songs, and he sings some of them to me, very harmoniously, and with feeling. They are pleasant little lyrics of peasant life; thoughts, sad and sweet, that come spontaneously to this Robert Burns of France, while he gathers fruit in the orchard, trims the olive tree, or guides the plough. They are marked by the simplicity that is his very self. We talk of the country, its legends, its language. He is rather sad about it all; because this great France, with its towns and railways, is so fast swallowing up Provence. The peasants are becoming French; "and already, at Arles, they speak the pure language, just as it is spoken in Paris." The local customs, too, are dying out, he says, and the people's pride in them; the peasants are gathering in the towns, and not coming back, not even at Christmas, when, of old, all the family used to gather round the blazing log,

Charloun's words recall to me what Mistral has written in L'Isclò d'Or: "L'envie nous prit de nous fondre dans la France. Allons y! De nos anciens usages nous empilons un tas et nous brulons tout.

"Adieu la mémoire des ancêtres, l'amour du gai-savoir, la splendeur des Trouvères. Adieu! adieu l'argent prêté derrière la porte. Vertus, bonheur d'antan, vous n'étiez que des fables. . . . C'est bien; nous voilà un grand peuple, et vive la nation! . . . Table rase, écrivons le passé, quel qu'il soit."¹

Charloun, though philosophic on the subject, is a little sad, too, about himself and about this burden of song that means so much to him, and so little to the many who judge of a thing's value only by what it can produce. Yet there are some who sympathise and understand; and he shows me a German translation of his verses that a friend has done. We talk a little about other literatures, of which, very naturally, he knows not much. Do I think Shakespeare as great a poet as Racine or Corneille? When I have answered that—and he is a little surprised, I think, at the decision with which I do so—he begins to speak of the félibres, among whom he seems to be too modest to number himself, although Mistral told me that Charloun was one of their foremost members. Then he tells me how hard they have worked to establish a Provençal literature that shall preserve the language for all time.

But the evening is coming on; and I part from the peasant poet, who waves me a goodbye from his cottage door.

In the glow of a glorious sunset, with a strong west wind whistling in my ears, I leave little Paradou among the hills, and ride past the stone quarries to Fontvieille, where, not feeling disposed to renew my battles with the gales of Provence, I await a train for Arles. I wait, I wait. At last I inquire of the clerk in the booking office—

"How late do you suppose the train will be?"

¹ The desire came to us to merge ourselves into France. Let us do it. We pile into a heap our ancient customs and we burn them all.

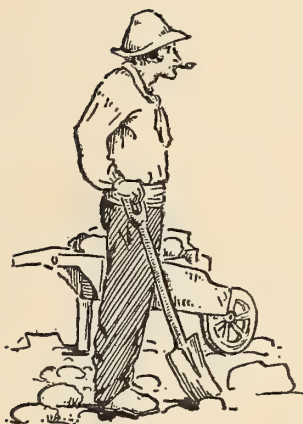
Farewell the memory of our ancestors, the love of gay knowledge, the splendour of the Trouvères. Farewell! farewell money lent behind the door [without formality]. Virtues, happiness of yester-year, you were only fables. . . . 'Tis well; here are we a great people, and long live the nation! . . . A clean sweep, let us wipe out the past, whatever it may have been.

"It will probably be an hour late, Monsieur. You see, there is the stone to collect from the quarries of Fontvieille, and all that takes time."

"I understand. And, after all, there is no hurry."

"None at all, Monsieur."

It came in an hour and five minutes late. Mais que voulez-vous?



CHAPTER XII

THE CAMARGUE AND ITS LEGEND

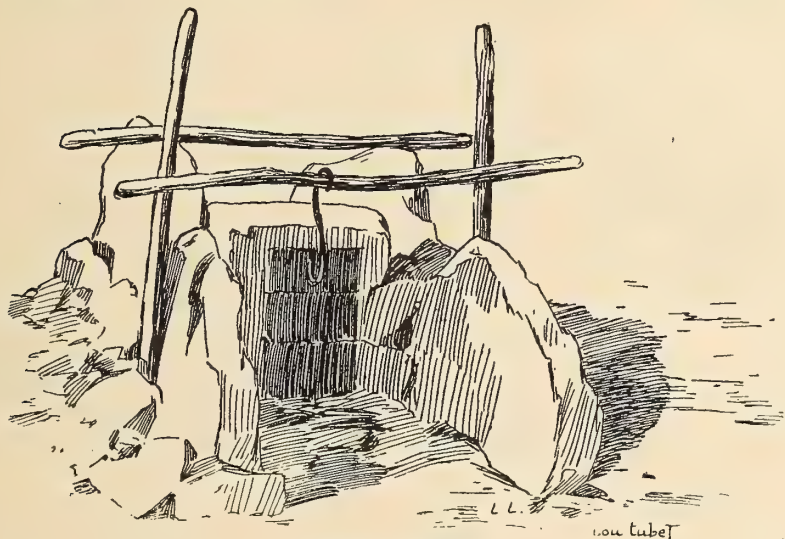
A LITTLE railway crosses the Camargue¹ from Trinquetaille to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer. Travelling by it one can catch only a glimpse of the character of the Rhône's delta; but that glimpse is enough to make one realise the spell that the very name Camargue casts over many minds.

Near Arles the land is still well-cultivated, and trees abound—many of them wind-dishevelled, but still worthy of the name. Gradually, kilometre by kilometre, they become less frequent, and the farms more scattered, as the soil loses its fertility, until now the eye can range, from horizon to horizon, over an unbroken plain, that, with every yard, grows wilder and more desert. There are scattered patches of heather, wind-swept tamaris shrubs, desert spaces of dried mud on which the white salt lies thickly incrustated. At intervals, in the far distance, rise a red-tiled farmhouse and a long line of trees. Now we pass among yellow, tufted grasses that spring up from the morass, by patches of arable land over which three yoke of pale oxen draw the plough; past a herd of sheep and goats, guarded by one lonely shepherd and his dog. There are six donkeys moving through the bushes on the bank of a dried-up stream, here a horse and some cattle feeding upon scanty pastures that are dappled with daisies. Sometimes a patch of rich grass shows the reward of a skilful irrigator. Two magpies flit away from

¹ Murray says that the name is derived from the Greek, and means "the field of reeds"; but the derivation is much more probably Roman, "Caii Marii ager," or, possibly, Spanish, from Camarca—frontiers.

the line at our approach. High above us a great hawk hovers in the air.

As we draw near the sea, the scene becomes every moment more arid and desolate, and the waters gain upon the land—brown, shallow, shivering waters that look sad and sallow, even under a bright sky. The heather and the grasses are at each stage more scanty, and, for farms, one sees only an occasional hovel, savage to its very name.¹

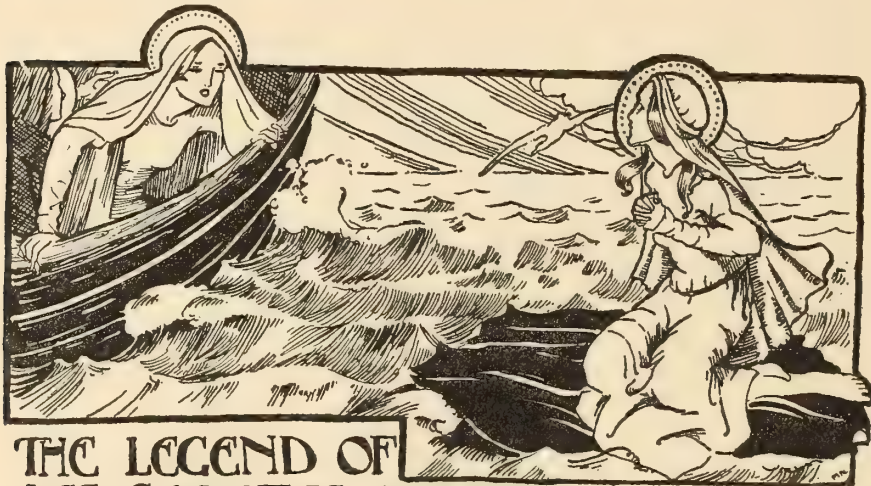


IN THE CAMARGUE.

Now more water, and yet more; wider expanses of it that deepen and take a fuller light and colour as the sea triumphs far and wide. 'Tis a scene of utter loneliness and desolation, where almost nothing comes but the wind and the weather, though, here and there, you may catch a glimpse of a white road, along which a lonely labourer is making for his home. In the distance, where land, and sea, and sky seem to meet as one, the light falls upon the yellow fortress church, rising above Les Saintes Maries de la Mer.

¹ One of the names is Maguelonne Le Sauvage.

This strange little village, the only one in all the Camargue—a spot where the east and the west seem mysteriously to come together—is the home of one of the most beautiful of all the legends of Provence, that which tells how the holy women brought the faith of Christ into France. This is the story as it is told at Les Saintes.



THE LEGEND OF LES SAINTES MARIES ❀

After the death of Christ the Jews still raged against those who had been His friends upon earth, and the high priests fanned the flames of their anger. Now they who had been His closest friends were these—Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary; Maximin, the friend of Lazarus; Mary Salome, and Mary the mother of James; Parmenas, one of the seven deacons; St. Trophimus, St. Joseph of Arimathea, and some others. They were at Jaffa upon the coast of Palestine.

Many of the Jews would willingly have slain them all, but fearing the effect of their courage and faith upon the people, they choose rather to put them to a more obscure, though not less certain, death.

They throw them all into a bark without sails, oars, pilot, rudder, or food; and deliver them thus to the mercy of the waves. When they are already some way from the shore, a cry comes to them over the water. 'Tis t'le cry of Sarah, the servant of Mary Salome, and of the Mother of James, who would fain share the blessed fate of her mistresses. Salome takes from her shoulders her cloak, throws it upon the water, and gently it glides to the shore. Upon that holy raft the young girl is borne to the side of the bark, and, no sooner is she safely on board, than the little vessel, piloted now by an angel hand, passes unharmed among the dangerous reefs, and, gliding into the open sea, turns its prow towards the west. And His voice who stilled the billows upon the Sea of Tiberias, stills the waves about its way.

Slowly, crest after crest, the hills of their sweet country vanish from their sight. "Farewell, farewell, holy land! Farewell, Judæa, given over henceforth to sorrow, that hast driven away thy just ones and hast crucified thy God! Farewell, land of our birth, farewell!" Who shall tell the grief that fills them as they sail over alien seas, and range the coasts of unknown lands.

One morning, while the bark is moving, always westward, over a silent sea, what is this rumbling that, from the depths of the horizon, comes swelling and deepening into a mighty roar? The hurricane is upon them. Louder and louder it howls; higher and higher the waves rise, until great fear is upon all; and even the face of Lazarus, pale always with the mortal pallor of the tomb and the shroud, blanches to hear it. Long flashes of lightning pierce the gloom, and above them the thunder peals.

Then Lazarus cries out: "My God who hast torn me once from the tomb, be now our pilot; help us, the vessel sinks." From the high palace of His triumph, Jesus, with pitying eyes, looks down upon His friend; and, suddenly, a long ray of sunshine flashes across the tempest. The winds abate, the great

waves are stilled, the clouds disperse; and across the gently heaving water appears a fringe of golden sand. There the bark softly touches, and there the travellers, falling prostrate, return thanks: "Our lives, that Thou hast snatched from the tempest, we hold to proclaim Thy law, O Christ!" And at that name of joy the noble land of Provence is shaken; before that new cry the forest and the plain shudder through all their being.

The saints stay their hunger upon the shell-fish that the sea has thrown up, and, for their thirst, God opens, in the arid plain, a fresh and limpid stream, that still flows beneath the church where their holy bones now rest. There they build an altar, and perform the sacred rites; and then, bent upon the conquest of Provence for Christ, they part upon their several missions.

Lazarus goes to Marseilles, of which town he becomes the first bishop. St. Mary Magdalene follows her brother thither, and, thence, after a sojourn at Aix, passes to Sainte Baume, there to expiate her sins by thirty long years of penitence and tears; until, in the grotto that is in the heart of the virgin forest, she passes away to God.¹ St. Maximin, too, goes to Aix; St. Trophimus carries the gospel to the Roman paganism of Arles; St. Martha triumphs over the dragon in the forest of Nerluc, and founds her Christian church at Avignon. Only the two Marys, because they are now already old, remain with their servant Sarah upon the shore.

There they build a little cell, close to the oratory, and there the simple fishermen of the Camargue come to them, to hear the new faith, to listen to the wonderful story of the journey across the sea, and to drink at the miraculous stream; and there many of them are converted. Sarah, their servant, was wont to make journeys into the Camargue to beg necessities for the holy women, and that is why she became the particular friend, and is to-day

¹ The little river Jaut that runs into the sea at Marseilles sprang from the tears of the Magdalene.

the chosen saint, of the gipsies whom the French call the Bohémiens. For more than thirty years Mary Salomé and Mary Jacobé laboured in Provence, before pious hands laid their bodies to rest, and built a little church over their bones.

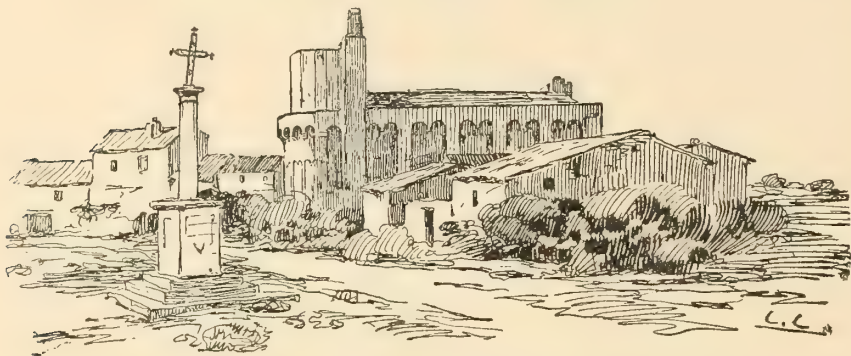


THE TWO MARYS.

The present fortress church that marks the resting-place of the saints, is of the twelfth century, but part of it goes back certainly to the tenth century. The venerable curé showed another traveller and myself over the old building, which is most curious in design. It consists of a single nave of seven bays, roofed with a pointed barrel vault, and leading by a broad flight of steps down to the crypt where the relics of St. Sarah lie. At the east end of the church is a tower like a donjon keep, within which are three chapels, one above another, the lowest one, over the crypt, forming the choir of the church. In the uppermost is the double ch^âsse containing the bones of the saints. The entrances to the church are by dark and narrow passages that altogether carry out the idea of the fortress. Externally the building is surrounded by a crenelated and machicolated rampart. It was probably the fear of Saracen invasion, and perhaps of pirates, that, even in the twelfth century, caused the churches of the South to be fortified.

Our guide told us how, in July 1448, King René of Anjou, hearing that the bones of the saints were to be found in the church of Notre Dame de la Mer, instituted a search for the relics. They opened the floor of the building and discovered the flow of sweet water coming from the miraculous spring. Further search revealed the bodies, lying with the hands crossed over the breast, and the feet towards the great altar. Both bodies exhaled a sweet perfume.

We visited the upper chapel from which the châsse containing the relics is let down on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage of 24th May, and were shown the ancient church documents, locked



LES SAINTES MARIES DE LA MER, SHOWING THE CHURCH.

up in a rickety cupboard, and all falling to pieces. It seems a thousand pities that they should not be examined, and preserved in some place of safety, for, quite possibly, there lie hidden there, in the dust of centuries, papers of great historical interest and value, that are now food for the mice.

We mounted on to the roof and made the tour of the battlements. It was from this path that, in 1591, the little son of Marguerite Moul fell over the parapet to the ground, more than forty feet below. "Great Saints, save my child!" cried the frantic mother, as the boy disappeared; and when witnesses of the accident ran to pick up the child's body, they found him sitting on the ground, smiling, without a scratch.

That is perhaps the most wonderful of all the many miraculous preservations and healings that the intercession of the saints has wrought in Les Saintes Maries de la Mer.

But it is not over individuals only that the saints exert their guardian powers: they protect the town also. For once, at Les Saintes, when the black clouds had been over the sky for five days past, and the rains had fallen in torrents, the sea, rising before a great wind, threatened to engulf the town. Then the pious ones of the place went to the church, took out the holy *châsse*, and, followed by all the inhabitants, bore it in solemn procession to the shore, and advanced it into the teeth of the tempest. Even as they did so, the violence of the wind abated, the clouds broke and vanished; and a great calm fell upon the sea. And that evening, in the church, all the inhabitants chanted before the *châsse* their grateful thanks to their preservers.

Before we left him, Monsieur le Curé took us into his house, opposite the church, and showed us there an authentic portrait engraving of King René, the likeness of which was easily recognisable from the painting by Nicholas Froment that I had seen in the cathedral at Aix. We were shown also a richly embroidered and worked cape that is supposed to have been worn by the same king.

When we were again in the place he explained that the big posts there with the iron rings were for erecting barriers for the bull-fights. I was, at first, a little surprised to realise that the bull-ring was formed by the church on the south side, and by the vicarage on the west; but such an arrangement is typically Provençal.

"We can see the bull-fights well from our top windows," said Monsieur le Curé, with an upward glance; "but the summer is the time for them, and it is so late in coming! By this time last year this lime tree was in full leaf; and to-day there are only buds." He pulled down a bough towards him, and looked at it reproachfully.

And so, promising to return for the pilgrimage, I left Les Saintes Maries de la Mer.

CHAPTER XIII

BESIDE THE DEAD WATERS

How well I remember my last visit to Aiguesmortes! The autumn rains had been so heavy that the floods were out over all the Camargue, which was, for the time, one great inland lake. They took me as far as to Le Cailar, where the water held up the train; so I sought out the station-master and questioned him concerning the possibility of continuing my journey by road. His reply was emphatic—

“It is possible to get there by carriage; but it is very dangerous. There is a metre of water upon the roads; the guard-posts are covered, and, on either side of you, the water will be from two to three metres deep. Once get off the track and—*Pan! vous êtes perdu.*” His right hand made a significant downward movement.

“Are you sure that it is as bad as that?” I said, mindful of a certain Provençal tendency to overstatement.

“If Monsieur is not satisfied, let him ask the courier who is lunching in the café over there.” I made for the café, but, since the courier was not there, and could not be discovered, I decided to return to Arles. Later on, looking from the train, and seeing what I believed to be the towers of Aiguesmortes rising from an inland sea, I realised that, though I had lost an adventure, I had escaped a real danger. A few days later I tried again, and found myself at Aimargues, sitting on the front seat of the mail-cart, beside that same courier whom I had missed at the café. As we rattled over the flat road to Aiguesmortes, I asked him for his experiences of that day last week.

"Pardi! we were in the open sea. Sometimes the water was up to the horse's belly, and sometimes it was over the bottom of the cart"—a high, two-wheeled *jardinière*. "It was up to the first fork of that tree you see there by the bridge."

"And how did you find the road?"

"Eh bin! I left it to the old horse. He is used to it, and never makes a mistake."

I expected to see the animal turn his head; but he only jogged on.

Every yard of the way revealed disaster. On either side of the road the purple bunches drooped ungathered, all bedraggled, a tear of mud hanging from every grape. "There a thousand sheep were drowned"—the driver pointed with his whip to a farmhouse near the road. "There three hundred fat cattle were lost last week—the water rises so suddenly."

I looked round over the shining lakes on either side of me. To my right a shepherd, followed by his dog, swimming, was wading breast-high through the flooded vines. They were making for a hut which stood upon a little island that rose two or three feet out of the surrounding water. I had just time, as we passed, to see them land and shake themselves before disappearing into the building.

How it had rained that autumn, and how the mosquitoes had revelled in it! They had been upon us in clouds that day, "*comme une pluie*," as the courier said. But now it is spring-time; the mosquitoes are not yet hatched, and from a cloudless sky the sun shines over a dusty Provence.

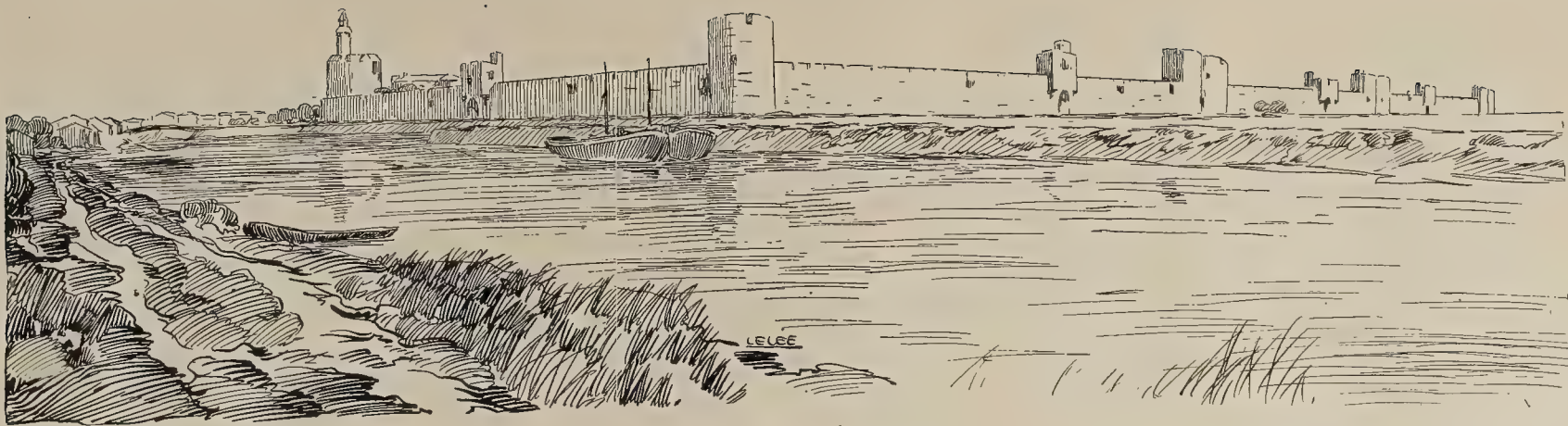
This rock at the end of the little jetty of the Port of Grau du Roi is good to sit on. I cycled here, along the canal road, in bright sunshine, with the scented sea-breeze in my face, and the grim walls and towers of Aiguesmortes lessening behind me. The eastern quay of the little village is thronged with "world," and the harbour is alive with boats and fishermen unloading their hauls.

Between the stone jetties, the *Marie-Mira* and three other fishing-boats are sailing up the harbour in single file, the foam swishing softly from their bows. The tideless, shining, blue Mediterranean beyond, once dotted with the sails of the crusaders' fleet, shows to-day the white wings of the trawlers. The plage, east and west, with its golden sands, fringed by the grassy dunes, is irresistibly alluring. I must walk there and dream the musical sea-dreams that come to me sometimes by the shore.

But stay! if I do so, I shall have to stop the night at Aiguesmortes; and that is a dangerous adventure! Has not Mr. Henry James told us that "fever and ague enter those gates with the darkness"? Has not Mr. Cook written that "the sentinels of the town are disease and desolation"? But then I remember my visit to Mistral, and his assurance that he has slept there—and is still alive. So, too, are the inhabitants of the town. Certainly, I will stay.

The sound of the waves is soothing as they swish and swirl and gurgle about these rocks; so, later on, is tea in front of a café by the quay. The many-coloured fishing-boats glide past me, one by one, dropping sail as they come. From one of them clatter two blue mariners with brilliant, wide, scarlet belts, bearing each a basket of flashing fish; there passes a bevy of laughing peasant girls, scarlet from head to foot, just as I saw them at Martigues. Loud is the buzz of talk from the café, loud are the sabots on the flag-stones. How good all this sound and colour are to a wanderer from the silent, gloom-wrapped North.

For the first time in my life I walk by the shore of the tideless sea. After all, it is not very different from our own; only its blue is deeper, more passionate—even the waters are more passionate in the South—its light more dazzling, and the sand, perhaps, less golden, for being less often washed. But it is just as good to walk upon; and, as my rising foot lifts, at each step,



AIGUES-MORTES. RAMPARTS AND TOUR CONSTANCE.

a flake of it on the point of the shoe, I am reminded of certain thoughts that came to me, when last, in England, I watched just such flakes as these falling back upon the sand. But there were two pairs of footprints, on that occasion.

I sit on a sand-bank, and look out over the water. The long procession of fishing-boats is still wending homeward from the horizon—the farthest of them but faintly visible where the sea and the sky melt into a pale blue distance, the nearer one almost lost to sight where it crosses the burnished mirror of the sun, whose path of light flashes to my very feet. How good is the waves' melody, when

“As bells on the reins of the fairies ring
The ripples that kissed them rang.”

Listening to them, a nameless emotion within me responds to the magic, the mystery, and the eternal music of the sea.

But the crabs are annoyed. They have been living, for some time past, a tranquil existence, undisturbed by the foot of man; and to-day they are suddenly scrambling by thousands, out of the sand, and sent scuttling into the deeps. 'Tis always so; “*Toujours assauts divers.*”

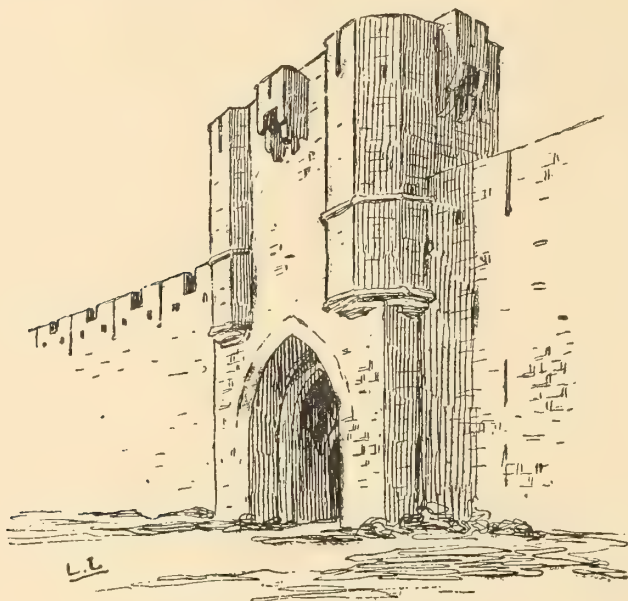
This plage is full of memories. Alexandre Dumas was here once in the flesh, and—almost as real to me—these sands are one of the pathways in the garden of Bérénice.¹ There, too, in quest of her lost lover, Pierre de Provence, came La Belle Maguelone.²

The approach to Aiguesmortes from the north is disappointing. Beyond the walls of the town there have sprung up, on that side, trees and buildings that break the picture, and so spoil the effect. But here, from the south, the great,

¹ *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, by Maurice Barrès.

² The story of Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelone is, after Aucassin and Nicolette, the best known, as it is the most gracious, of the few ancient Provençal narrative poems that have come down to us.

solemn ramparts, in all their majesty of crenelated battlements and towered gateways, rise in an unbroken line above the plain, complete and whole as when Philip the Bold built them. The stones, like those of all the other monuments of Provence, have borrowed from the sun the soft, golden brown that is so pleasing to the eye, and, protected as they have been by the "dead waters" above which they were raised, there has been no need here for the restorer's hand.



A GATE IN THE RAMPARTS.

It is this fact of their preservation that makes these fortifications of Aiguesmortes the most interesting in France. They are not elaborate as are those of Carcassonne; but they are much less theatrical, and by so much the more convincing and sincere. There is a solemn majesty about them, a lonely, twilight melancholy, such as I have never experienced elsewhere, that broods over this dead city of the waste.

As I drew near and passed into the shadow of the walls,

and beneath the towered gateway, my thoughts went back to the soldier-saint who gathered his crusading fleet here when as yet there was not a habitation, excepting a few huts rising from the shifting sands.

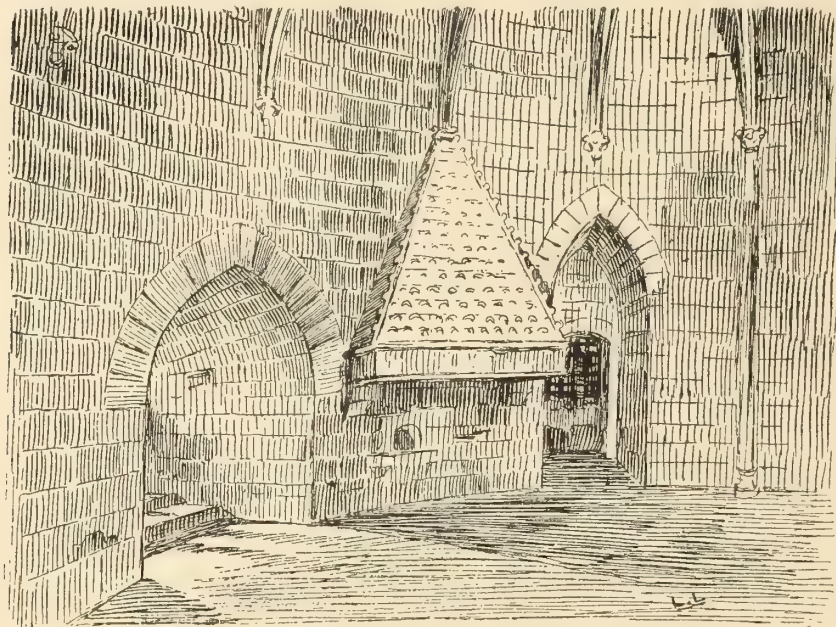
A port upon the Mediterranean had always been much needed by the kings of France, and Aiguesmortes did not belong to them, but to the neighbouring abbey of Psalmodi. Moreover, it was not worthy the name of port, not only on account of the quicksands, but because it was "*tellement décrié pour les mauvais airs et pour les eaux croupissantes, qu'on regardait comme un supplice, d'avoir à s'y embarquer.*"¹ But St. Louis acquired it from the monks, by exchange, and built, at great expense, the "Tour de Constance," which served as a lighthouse, and secured the pilgrims of the Holy Land against the pirates and the winds. The sight must have been a very impressive one, when, on that August day in 1248, "with the accustomed prayers and great solemnities," to the rising chant of "*Veni Creator Spiritus,*" the fleet of thirty-eight vessels sailed down to the sea.²

The gracious personality of the crusader is still the most pleasing memory of Aiguesmortes. His is one of those characters in which all that was best in the men of the Middle Ages—their courage, their determination, their piety, their chivalry and their romance—was found fully developed; and the story of his life cannot but awaken a strong affection for this preux chevalier, who, great king though he was, put on humility with the pilgrim's coat. "He was seen no more in clothing that was conspicuous either in material or colour; no more gold, no more silk, no more costly furs; nothing brighter than small grey or vair. Neither his arms nor the

¹ *Histoire de Saint Louis*, by Fillian de la Chaise, 1688.

² The existing canal between Aiguesmortes and Grau du Roi is not the one used by the crusaders. The old channel ran westward from the town, reaching the sea at Grau Saint Louis. Its remains may still be traced here and there. It must be borne in mind that, at that time, the sea was nearer to the town than is the case to-day.

harness of his horses bore anything but what was simple, and that which must of necessity shine was resplendent only by reason of the polish upon the steel. . . . But not wishing to be modest at the expense of the poor, who profited always by his fine array, he ordered an estimate to be made of the annual cost of his greatest magnificence, and caused that sum of money to be distributed to them regularly."¹



SALLE DES CHEVALIERS, IN THE TOUR CONSTANCE.

The old guardian took me over the Tour de Constance, and told me its tale of misery. While he was speaking I could almost hear the drip of blood upon the flag-stones of that lower chamber with the great hooded fireplace, and the sighs of the prisoners for whom the very windows in the thickness of the wall were utilised as dungeons.

¹ *Histoire de Saint Louis*, by Fillian de la Chaise.



To face page 130.

AIGUES-MORTES.

Suddenly I saw before me a figure that seemed like an apparition, so strangely did its fragile beauty contrast with the sternness of the surroundings. It was that of a young girl of sixteen or seventeen years of age, tall, slender in figure, and extremely graceful. She was shrinking timidly against the wall—rather afraid, I think, of being scolded by the old guardian for being there—and I had scarcely time to note the wild, shy glance of the deep, dark Southern eyes, before the long lashes veiled them, leaving me only the face to look at. It was the most beautiful face that I have looked upon, even in this land of lovely women; so exquisitely proportioned it was, so perfectly pure, light, and Grecian the grace of its features. The skin, naturally very white, was showing the work of the April suns; and, through a tinge of pink, the full colour flushed upon cheek and lips, set off by a cloud of dark hair that rippled down to her waist.

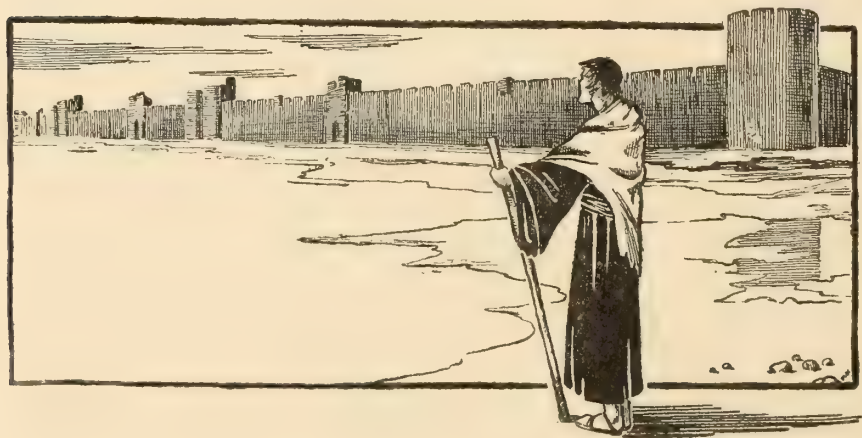
Was this a daughter of Bérénice? I interrupted my guardian's story to ask him who she might be, but could not succeed in interesting him. He merely replied that she was a peasant girl who had no business here; and then, making for the staircase, he went on with his story of what the prisoners suffered under the Roi Soleil. I followed up to the next floor, saying to him, "Very interesting, very interesting;" and to myself, "I hope she will leave the world a copy."

This delicately-vaulted chapel, where St. Louis knelt to pray for the gift of tears, is one of the daintiest specimens of early French Gothic that I have seen. While I stood admiring it, there came to my mind M. Barrès' thought of the little essential difference that there was between the king's meditations here, and the sufferings of the captives in the prison; since both experiences were the outcome of a common desire for something that shall complete the ego.

We passed on to the top of the tower, whence the eye has an uninterrupted range over the little red-roofed city enclosed within its rectangular ramparts, and over the limitless expanse

of desolate flats and shining étangs that are lost in the horizon and the sea. The sight is sublimely mournful, melancholy. Even the evidences of modern life, the new buildings and factories that are springing up outside the walls, the new railway that is being cut through to Grau du Roi, do but add another touch of pathos to the unspeakable sadness of the whole, that has so retained its continuity of outward form, and so lost the immediate purpose that changed its sadness into joy.

The peculiar fascination of Aiguesmortes to-day is for the solitary and the dreamer. Here he can taste the strong meat that solitude alone can give, and, from the towers of a spectral city, let his thought range over the dead waters, "seeking its definite formula across experiences," across emotions as fugitive as the sunset colours upon the marsh, or as the graces of the maiden whose beauty, an hour since, charmed me in the guard-room below.



CHAPTER XIV

CARCASSONNE

A FRIEND had said to me: "Wherever you may wander in France, do not miss Carcassonne. I promised him; and I shall bring my experiences into this book, though the city lies far beyond the geographical limits of Provence. Carcassonne is wonderful, beyond my expectations. At first I was disappointed. An impregnable position, and careful restoration, have left the ancient city so complete that my earliest impression was one of unreality, of theatricality. All that I saw was no more than a stage carpenter's triumph. I waited for the actors to appear, and was disappointed because they did not come.

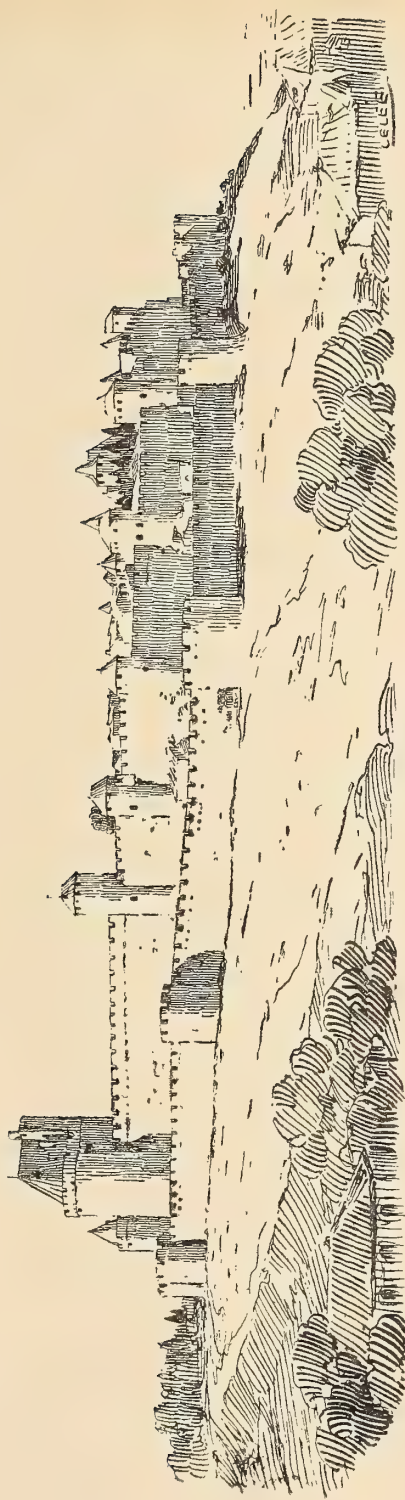
But gradually, wandering through the lices, one begins to realise that, though an anachronism, the glorious pile of towers and battlements is a fact; and then the ghosts of the dead city come forth, and its walls and streets begin to stir and hum with the dream people of the past. I see the line of battle rolling up the Eastern slopes; I hear the rattle and clang of the portcullis barring the double towers of the Narbonnaise Gate; I hear the warning cries, I see the ramparts lining themselves with men-at-arms, and, from within the city walls, there rises a confused murmur of voices. Now there is more shouting and confusion, the twang of bowstrings and the whirr of the arrow; thud after thud as the great stones, thrown from the catapult, impinge upon the ramparts; crash after crash as the ponderous head of the battering-ram swings upon the tower wall, while a rain of missiles comes rattling down upon its protecting roof

and upon the soldiers who are working it. Now ladders are against the walls, and, in an instant, they are full of swarming men; climbing, clinging, clutching, cursing, shouting, struggling. Some bear their arms in their hands, and some carry them between their teeth. The ladders with their living loads, wrenched and torn at from above, totter and sway, and some fall, adding a rain of men to the rain of missiles and arrows. Without the city there are braying trumpets, dancing banners, snorting chargers, and flashing arms; while within its houses are the white faces of anxious women, and, in the cathedral, pale monks at prayer for the living and the dead.

Such pictures come before me as I walk, from tower to tower, upon the rampart paths, and look within the city, upon the conical towers of its castle, the spires of its cathedral, the gabled roofs of its ancient dwellings; thence, outward, over the lices, to the ramparts of St. Louis, and on to the lower town of Carcassonne, to the shining plain of the Aude, and the great landscape ranging from the flashing snows of the Pyrenees to the purple light on the Cevennes.

How striking, too, is the contrast between these defiant towers and battlements, these walls that Philip the Bold raised upon Roman and Visigoth foundations, and the little patches of ancient peace, enclosures of garden and orchard, all gracious in tender greens and snowy blossoms, over which the bent old peasant stoops, while a young, white-robed wife plays with her children upon the grass. Once it was to these walls, and to the stout hearts within them, that the woman in the garden looked for her protection: and now. . . . Three guns there upon the crest of the Cevennes, three puffs of white smoke, a few times repeated; and for Carcassonne we should have but a smoking dust-heap to dream over.

But in the Middle Ages there were fewer gardens in the city than there are now; for, as some of the older houses fell, they were not replaced, and consequently the population has sunk from over two thousand to about twelve hundred, many of



CARCASSONNE.

whom are Spaniards, agricultural labourers in the fields around. One of the guides tells me that they are looked upon as very good workers, and that—since they live very poorly—they are content to work for less than the French. Even so, they manage always to save money, until they have amassed enough to enable them to return to Spain, there “in dolce far niente” to end their days.

Just beneath the walls, within the city, is the cathedral of St. Nazaire. Standing in the gloomy nave of the ancient Romanesque building, amid surroundings so typically Southern, it is with a certain pleased surprise that I find myself before a beautiful Gothic choir and transept, whose exquisitely graceful lines are revealed in the jewelled light of its many-hued windows—a Northern gem set here in the passionate South.

So attractive to me was the tender spirit of this sanctuary—“for dark and true and tender is the North,” even while the light floods it—that I could not leave when the women of Carcassonne came thronging in to vespers, but must needs sit there and listen languidly to the pealing organ music, while my eyes wandered from the kneeling, kerchiefed worshippers, to feed upon the glory of colour that streamed in through the eastern window. Very slowly, my senses, which at first were dulled with weariness, were quickened as the colour and the harmony spoke to my soul; and, minute by minute, as the more solemn vesper moments awoke a deeper throb in the music, as the chanting of the vested priests rose louder, and the responses of the people more fervent—as the great candles, one by one, shone out upon the altar, and the fragrant clouds of incense circled ever higher in curling wreaths towards the vaulted roof—my spirit heard the mysterious call of the ideal, distinguished through sound, and scent, and form, and colour; and I experienced fully that burning glow of æsthetic emotion—religious, poetical, mystical? I know not—the emotion that, whether beneath shadowy Gothic arches or between green, waving, woodland aisles; whether in the bosom

of Christian priest or of pagan poet, responds ever to the call—

“Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet,
From swung censer teeming,
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.”

It was to St. Nazaire that, after the tragedy before the walls of Toulouse,¹ they brought the body of Simon de Montfort for burial. This is what the old poet of the Albigensian Crusade, whom we have met before, has to say about it:—

“Straight to Carcassonne they bear him to his burial, and in St. Nazaire have the office celebrated; and his epitaph, to him that knows how to read it, says: That he is a saint, that he is a martyr, and that he must rise again, to inherit (heaven) and to flourish in eternal joy, to wear crown and sit upon the throne. And I, I have heard it said that thus it should be: if by slaying men and shedding blood; if by losing souls, consenting to murder; by believing false councils and setting fires ablaze; by letting loose the barons and shaming men of high degree; by wasting lands and encouraging violence; if by bringing down evil and extinguishing good, by cutting women’s throats and massacring children, a man can in this world gain Jesus Christ, then must the count wear the crown and be resplendent in the heavens.”

With which opinion the present writer is not disposed to quarrel.

The story of Carcassonne, as indeed of every town that lives in, and by, its past, is one that he who has once visited the

¹ The death of Simon de Montfort at the siege of Toulouse is thus vividly described: “There is in the town a machine for throwing stones, the work of a carpenter, who, from near Saint Sernin, discharges his stone. It is worked by women and girls and matrons. The stone (is thrown), it goes straight where it ought to go, it strikes Count Simon on his steel helmet with such force that the eyes, the brain, the top of the skull, the forehead and the jaws are smashed and broken to pieces. The count falls to the ground dead and bleeding and black.”

city—however little he may care for the dry facts of history—must familiarise himself, with more or less. He can escape from it at other places, at Toulouse, for example, because that city has a modern life; and in taking a general survey of it, one may rest more or less intelligently content with the knowledge, bestowed by its monuments, that a prosperous present has followed a glorious, though bloody, past. But the city of Carcassonne has no present; or only such as is represented by three dark Spanish labourers, passing, with shouldered spades, over the drawbridge in the evening.

That is why, at my second visit to the ramparts, I am led to think a little more definitely of the sieges that Carcassonne has endured: how that bloody horde, called the Albigensian Crusaders, swept up to these walls in August 1209, and took the city, when, after fourteen days of frantic fighting, almost all the defenders were dead or wounded; how some twenty years later it was besieged by Raymond de Trencaval, whose father—the defender in the former siege—had been taken prisoner at the capture of the city, and finally murdered after having been promised his life; how subsequently King Louis IX., taught by young Raymond's almost successful attempt, that the city was not impregnable, proceeded to build the external line of fortifications; leaving to his son Philip the Bold the task of completing the whole as we see it to-day. He made it so secure that it was never again taken by storm, though Edward the Black Prince attacked it in 1355 after plundering all Languedoc; and, early in the fifteenth century, John of Burgundy also flung his army against its walls.

While I have been at Carcassonne I have always felt—perhaps not unnaturally—that time spent in the new town is ill spent; and, whether I will or no, my feet take me again and again to the city. So drawn, I am here this afternoon, wishing that the life of the town, such as it is, would synchronise more with its setting; that I might meet once, in the evening, upon

the ramparts, a princess "gentille et courtoise et bien assise" as of old, with long, fair hair falling over a white robe, and with

"Gold at her head, gold at her feet,
Gold where the hems of the kirtle meet";

or perhaps, at a later hour, when the silver moon is high over the towers of the sleeping city, the blessed Damozel herself, bending over the ramparts, as Rossetti once saw her leaning out beyond the bar of heaven.

But what is this blaze of colour, that, as though sent in answer to my wish, is flashing by the castle wall, down the narrow street towards the Porte de Narbonne? Three acolytes in scarlet and white, the centre one holding high a silver cross that gleams in the sun, a priest in gold-embroidered black vestments, a black and silver pall, laden with purple violets. . . . Ah! I know now! A funeral convoy winding down to the lower town. Half an hour later, from the walls I saw the colour again, far below me, passing across a little place. Even death is coloured in the South.

.

The battlements of the Tour de l'Evêque are above me; below are the brown roofs of the old town, and, beyond them, seen through the fresh green of its bordering trees, the shining Aude, and the busy washerwomen upon its banks.

There is a glimpse, too, of the bridge, and, farther on, of the square, modern town, with its girdling boulevards, shown in thick copper lines by the buds of the plane trees that will soon break into green.

To my right, full in view, from their grassy bases, dark and stern and triumphant, rise the massed piles of gateways, battlements, conical towers, and castle walls that are the fortifications of the city of Carcassonne. Its stones are crevassed and blackened by the centuries, and, out of their crannies, caressing as a woman's hand, and adding a tint of softening beauty to the majesty of martial pride, cluster the golden masses of wallflower.

Below, on the sward at the foot of the wall, are browsing the goats, kept by an old goatherd in a great slouch hat and tattered clothes. One of the animals has his forefeet upon the wall, and is craning his neck towards a tuft of the tempting flower. Turning, I can look down upon the fir trees that sway in the breeze over the open space where the archbishop's palace once stood, until the Revolution swept it away, and with it the old cloisters that were against the wall of the chapel. Beyond the trees are the Barbican, and, towards Narbonne, over the yellow roofs, the twin towers of the Porte Narbonnaise. Far away, upon the lower slope of the Cevennes, the white road winds into the unknown.

I left the old city, for the last time, as the evening fell over Carcassonne. One of the guides accompanied me part of the way back to the modern town. Something—I expect it was the glow of the setting sun—reminded him of the “embrasement” when, on a summer's night, they illuminate the city with bengal fires that, lit behind the ramparts, reveal the bulk and outline of the fortifications silhouetted against a sheet of flame.

“Travellers tell me,” he said, “that it is the most impressive sight of its kind to be seen in the world; more wonderful even than the illumination of the Kremlin or of the city of Nuremberg.”

“That may well be. I can see that Carcassonne forms an ideal setting for flame and pageantry; but, for my part, I am quite content to leave the illumination of those ramparts to the care of the sun and the moon.”

“Vous faites bien, Monsieur; mais on me dit, quand même, que l'embrasement est tout ce qu'il y a du plus beau.”

“Sans doute, sans doute.”

But I was still looking at the sunset.

The modern town of Carcassonne, that St. Louis founded, is not particularly fascinating; but I found a walk round the picture-gallery quite worth the trouble of a visit. The catalogue is as usual “in course of preparation,” and—also as usual—will

doubtless remain in that stage for many years to come ; but the obliging and intelligent concierge is, in herself, an excellent substitute, possessing the additional advantage that she does not need to be carried round. She really cares for her pictures, and is as eager to learn more about them from her visitors, as she is to tell what she herself knows.

The gallery has some interesting souvenirs of the Chénier family, who were for several years residents at Carcassonne. Their house can still be seen here. These souvenirs include portraits of André (two), of his father and mother, and also that of a lady—bearing a striking likeness to André,—who was the last of the Chéniers, and under whose will all the family pictures, including the portraits and one or two paintings of the Spanish school, passed to the town.

The personality of André Chénier is, to me, as to many Englishmen, an attractive one ; by reason of the quality of his work in general, and, more particularly, of that beautiful poem, "La Jeune Captive," the pathos of which is rendered so much more poignant by the knowledge that, within a few hours after he had written it, the guillotine closed the poet's life.

There are many other good pictures in the gallery ; but they are not made the best of, being arranged and hung in the casual, chaotic manner that one learns, at last, to expect in a country that cares so little for its treasures of art. There are a Van Dyck, a Jordaens, a Ruysdael, and several more of the Dutch school ; also some examples by the two sentimentalists Greuze and Guido Reni. The best known picture in the exhibition is "Les Chérifas," by Benjamin Constant, which, though a very mediocre performance when judged as a whole, shows extremely clever handling of the play of light upon jewellery. There is some interesting modern work, including "St. Julien l'Hospitalier" by Aman Jean, and a gallery of paintings from the Salon of 1884 by Pelouse, Louis Descamps, and others. There is also a very sunny picture of Les Martigues by an artist who has not feared to make the Étang

de Berre blue. I have a pleasant souvenir of those galleries and of my companion, the intelligent Savoyarde.

Yesterday we had a wedding here at Carcassonne. I returned from a café at ten to find the rejoicings in full swing; bright flowers and bright dresses everywhere. Just as I am about to retire, I am stopped, upon the stairs, by Mademoiselle, who very kindly invites me to look on at the dancing for a while. I accept, and from a quiet corner, see what there is to be seen in the long ball-room filled with light, laughter, and whirling couples. The women fulfil all one's natural expectations of Southern dancers, and the men are certainly less awkward and less self-conscious than the majority of Englishmen of their class would be under similar circumstances.

One or two of them are tremendous. The tall military one, with the moustache à l'Empéreur Guillaume, is most elaborate and patronising, though quite kind in his willingness to restore to their rightful partners the younger ones who have lost their ways among the more intricate figures. He is very warm over it all; almost as warm as the little, round, red man who is plunging among the people like a bull among the amateurs of the ring—his passage marked by an occasional crisp rending of skirts.

I observe, too, a frail, pale, timid, brown-bearded youth, who seems to twinkle faintly through the dance, like a rain-blurred star. He is nervous, even at this late hour of the night, and when he leaves his partner he bows as might a marionette worked by an infirm hand.

In the corner, opposite to me, is another type; one who has grown old and corpse-like before his time, nodding in his chair, his hands folded like an undertaker's man at a twenty-guinea funeral. Beside him is a brunette . . . but at that moment the music ceases, and all the couples, as though abandoning themselves at last to the centrifugal forces of their final spin,

radiate, amid much hand-clapping, towards the benches along the wall. . . . Sssht! silence! Mademoiselle Berthon is going to recite.

Mademoiselle Berthon is the rather haughty, Roman-looking maid in pink, with the smile that is just a trifle disdainful, and the hazel eyes that flash beneath a broad brow and coils of luxuriant brown hair. Madame whispers across to me: "Elle est magnifique dans Napoléon"—and it is "Napoléon" that the pink Roman, now upon her pink feet, announces as the title of her piece. 'Tis a dramatic episode of the emperor's life at Elba, done by the young girl with a power and feeling that, despite such little faults of deportment as an occasional sudden writhing motion of the body, and certain promenading movements of her tongue round her mouth—a trick doubtless acquired from many performances in rooms as hot as this one—earn for her loud and generous applause. The hand-clapping over, Madame leans eagerly towards me.

"Elle n'est pas mal. Hein?"

I acquiesce emphatically.

Madame smiles—and picks her teeth with a needle. It was three in the morning before the last wheels echoed away.

On the wings of a favourable wind, I sped eastward, my face turned again towards Provence.

At Moux I dropped into an inn for lunch; the dirtiest and most dismal inn that ever I entered, but the only one in the village that appeared to be at all possible. From its blackest depths the landlady, dirty and dismal as her house, stared at me dumbly for some moments. Then she approached, and I ordered food. My request was received with not unexpected surprise.

"Nous ne sommes pas habitués. . . ." She spread her bony hands deprecatingly—and a group of six unshaven men in the darkest corner ceased from their conversation, to join in so stony a twelve-barrelled stare, that, but for the hardening

effects of a longish sojourn in the South, I must have slunk out of that inn unmanned.

After I had waited some minutes at a greasy table, the woman brought me food—bread and butter, and goats' milk cheese that looked unclean as herself. With her came her two cats.

As I looked at them, an uncanny sensation that had been upon me from my first entrance, now made itself strongly felt. Never have been seen such cats since the weird sisters vanished at the call of grimalkin. Once black and white, they were now all black; scraggy too, evil-eyed, mangy, matted and torn, with the red flesh showing in patches; each with an eye gouged out, and a yellow substance streaming from a festering wound. Snaky and swift in their movements, they jumped simultaneously upon the chairs on either side of me, then turned their torn eyes upon mine, and, emitting horrible gurglings, clawed at my hands. I turned an appealing glance towards the witch, who scowled upon them both.

"Les sales bêtes, je vais les fouetter." Starting up, she snatched from the wall a long cane that whistled past my ears with a swish down on to the torn backs. The gurglings changed to demoniac cries as the brutes vanished into the darkest, farthest corner, whence two luminous eye-balls shone out.

Then I turned to my food. Food! no, this is not food! This is a hell-broth that the midnight hags brewed of a blaspheming Jew's liver and the heart of a toad: I cannot eat here. "Hag, . . . I mean Madame, . . . it is later than I thought; and—and your cats are not very clean."

"Not very clean, Monsieur; c'est qu'ils sont toujours dans le charbon."

The weird sister, the six black men in the corner, and those two shining eye-balls glared from the darkness as I ran out into the heavenly sun that welcomed me at the door. Upon the wings of the wind I rode furiously, as one "that dares not

turn his head," lest he should see behind him, in hot pursuit, *her* and the two maimed, nameless things that are "always in the coal."

All the way to Narbonne I was hot and clammy, and felt "a pricking in my thumbs."





AVIGNON. THE PALACE OF THE POPES AND CATHEDRAL.

CHAPTER XV

THE CITY OF THE POPES

THE day has been intensely hot ; and now that night has fallen upon the papal city I go out in quest of coolness and the Rhône.

The breeze that fans my face is deliciously fresh and soft. . . . The sky above me is clear and studded with stars ; the crescent moon is up in the west, and over it one great, still planet shines. To my right, above the dark masses of foliage that line the quays, the great towered palace of the popes, and the church of Notre Dame des Doms, faintly revealed by the glare from the town, glimmer silhouetted against the sky. On the other bank, the town of Villeneuve and the great fort St. André project themselves mysteriously through the darkness, while in the black river that dimly reflects the starshine, the lamps on the quay trace lines of trembling light.

Stillness and solitude ! yet I can hear the water below me souging and swishing against its pillars ; there comes a murmur from the town, and a night chorus of croaks from the frogs in the marshes. The night is quivering with the mystery

of shapeless things that come floating from it, sighing and shadowy, as when, on the night of St. Médard, the spirits of the unhappy dead rise dripping from the Rhône, and, holding each a lighted taper, pass in single file under the poplars. Perhaps this *is* the night of St. Médard! perhaps those lines of light that tremble in the starlit water are not what I thought them to be, but are the death fires of the unhappy dead; old men and women, fishermen whom the water took, and young girls who, mad with love, and torn from their lovers, asked a last dreadful kindness of the Rhône “pour noyer leur immense douleur.”¹

Brrrrrr!! a hooting of sirens. Turning, I am blinded by two great dazzling eyes of light that are rushing upon me out of the darkness, as the car whirls by over the bridge, and is swallowed up in the streets of Avignon.

The spell of the night is broken, and I, too, return to the city. As I pass the Hôtel d'Europe, into the courtyard of which the hotel omnibus is rattling, I am reminded of a story told me, not long since, by a certain novelist who was staying there. He, feeling lonely, as solitary travellers sometimes do, and being, moreover, attracted by the bright eyes of a young English girl who was staying there under the strict surveillance of a stern matron, made advances to the young lady with a view to inducing her to accompany him upon a little expedition. She being by no means averse, they agreed to breakfast together very early in the morning; that being the only hour at which they could rely upon the matron's eyes being closed.

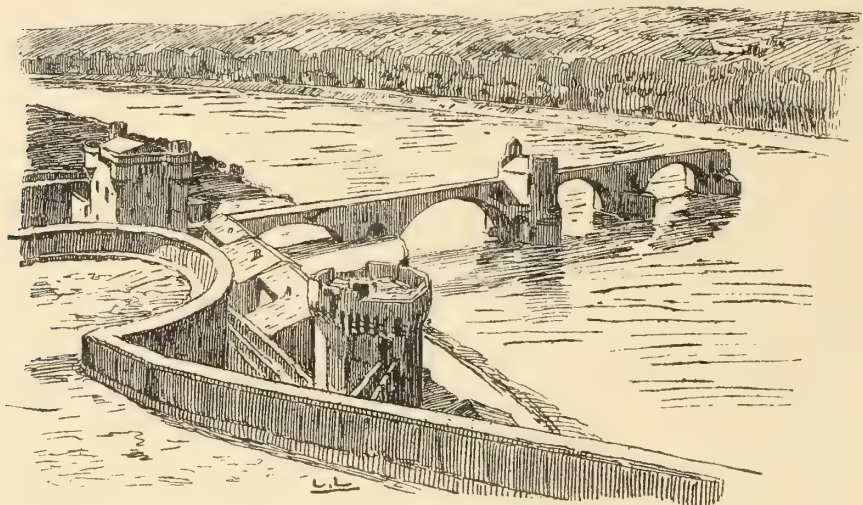
So, soon after daybreak, before ever the most matutinal of the menials had unlocked the front door, there was the lonely one—hurriedly clothed and scarcely washed, so fearful was he of being late—waiting upon a landing of the creaking old stairs for Nicolette, who joined him, at last, on tiptoe. Together they made their escape to a certain café across the water, called

¹ See Mistral's *Mireille*, Chant v.

the "Café des Gourmets," where they consumed a triumphant déjeuner à deux.

When the guardian and her charge descended at nine o'clock to their café complet, the elder lady was not yet quite sufficiently wide-awake to detect any significance in a fleeting glance that passed between her companion and the young man opposite.

There being no open-air facilities in this hotel, and feeling



THE BRIDGE OF ST. BÉNÉZET.

disinclined to déjeuner beneath a roof, I take my little package up to the Rocher des Doms, which is the pleasure garden of the people of Avignon, and there lunch, under the shade of the fir trees, before a pool whose swans keep me cool with their splashing; and I have bird-music for orchestra. From the crest of the rock the view is very beautiful, down on to the shining Rhône and the little chapel on the broken bridge of St. Bénézet that once extended as far as the shining tower of Philippe le Bel upon the opposite bank, above which rises Villeneuve les Avignons, the double-towered gateway and great machicolated battlements of the fort St. André. I look, too, away over the

green isle of Barthelasse—a lake when I last saw it—and on to the great Ventoux, upon whose crest the melting snows still linger.

Descending to the river-side, I walk out to the bridge, massively built in a semi-Roman manner, and to the Romanesque and Gothic chapels that once held the relics of the little shepherd of Avilar, the child who achieved by faith what the engineers of that day had failed to accomplish by science. This is the story of Saint Bénézet.



One summer's day, in a year towards the close of the twelfth century, a little shepherd, staff in hand and with a bundle bound upon his back, might have been seen making his way eastward, over the hills of Villeneuve, towards that Provence to which, for many days past, a mysterious angel voice had been summoning him from the mountains where he had left his flock. Difficult though the road was, and all unknown to him, the fatigues of these days of travel—the first that he had ever experienced—had been made easy for him by the companionship of a fair, white-robed youth who had spoken to him sweet things by the way.

But now that youth had suddenly vanished, and the little shepherd boy found himself alone at sunset by the green banks

of a broad river, on the farther side of which there rose into the evening sky the towers and steeples of a great city—the city of Avignon. The river was quite deserted; not a boat was to be seen upon its gliding waters; and with a sigh, wondering how he was to cross, the child sat down upon the shore, and filling with water the palm of his little hand, began to sprinkle the weary petals of the sun-scorched wild flowers that were growing about him.

Suddenly a sound from the river made him look up, and there, close to the bank, was a boat rowed by a boatman with a bent nose, a pointed beard, and a dark and cunning eye. His face alight with joy, the boy rose and signalled to the boatman to approach. The man did so.

“What do you want of me, fine sir?” said he, sneering.

“Call me not so,” said the little shepherd, all in confusion. “I am but a poor shepherd, journeying in obedience to a call from Heaven, and am hindered by this river that I cannot cross. I beg of you, in the name of God and of His sweet mother, the Lady Virgin, to take me over in your boat.”

The old boatman laughed a laugh that was like the croak of a raven, as he replied—

“There is but one God whom I obey. My ancestors called him Baal, but I call him Gain; and for none other do I care, surely as my name is Reuben the son of Zaccharia.”

“What is thy name?”

“Benoit, but they call me Bénézet, because I am so little,” said the child.

“Benoit, then,” croaked the Jew—and his voice rattled like coins in an iron box—“if you would cross the Rhône, give me a little silver crown; or, if not, stay here until you are strong enough to swim over.”

“I have neither gold nor silver,” said Bénézet, with tears in his eyes; “but here are three little copper deniers that are all my saving—and he held them out to the Jew.

“After all,” said Reuben to himself, “three deniers, however

thin, are always three deniers, and there are few crossing to-day." So, with a growl, he consented to take the child, and Bénézet leaped joyfully into the boat, and fixing his eyes upon the basilica of Notre Dame des Doms that shone high upon the rock, he was ferried over to the other bank.

Safely ashore in the great city, the little shepherd boy, threading his way with difficulty through more and longer streets than ever he had seen before, came at last to the cathedral, where a great congregation was gathered round the Bishop Pons, who was preaching. Bénézet slipped quietly into a dark corner, and listened to the bishop's closing words. Then, when the sermon was over and the organ had pealed out the last notes of the closing hymn, little Bénézet pushed his way boldly before the bishop, who was about to address a last exhortation to the faithful. The prelate frowned to see himself interrupted by a little ragged boy, and those about him tried to stop the presumptuous child; but Bénézet, freeing himself from them, raised his hand, and cried with a loud voice: "I am sent to you, Monseigneur, by the Lord God, who has bid me build a bridge over the Rhône, here before the town of Avignon."

The bishop looked at the child, upon whom the eyes of all the crowd were turned, and said, rather in pity than in anger: "Are you then, little one, richer and more powerful than Charlemagne, who built this church and yet shrank from the task that you talk of so lightly? . . . Go, child, return to thy sheep, and mistake not a foolish dream for the voice of God."

"I am sent by our Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest, the most powerful, and the richest of all kings. He has commanded, and I shall obey; for I am only the poor shepherd Bénézet, whilst He is ruler of heaven and earth."

The bishop gazed doubtfully upon the face of the mysterious youth, now aglow with enthusiasm; and those around, who, at first, had been disposed only to mock, now began to wonder.

A murmur arose from the crowd. The bishop left the church, followed by Bénézet, and after them pressed a great multitude that, curious and excited, was already dividing itself into two parties, some acclaiming a divine messenger, and some denouncing a child of the devil.



BÉNÉZET AND THE ANGEL.

Now, not far from the rock was the palace of the viguier,¹ and, before the great gate, masses of stone were lying, one of them a great block so long and heavy that not thirty strong men could have moved it. Then the bishop put his hand upon the shoulder of the little shepherd, and said to him—

“Now if God has indeed sent thee to us, pray to Him that He may vouchsafe a miracle in thy favour. Carry this stone to the spot where thou wouldst build this bridge, and we will believe in thee.”

But however little and humble Bénézet may have been in the eyes of the world, yet was he high in the heart of God; and, in no wise astonished at the bishop's request, he bent down, took the great block in his frail arms, and with no

¹ Viguier, Latin vicarius, vicar.

more effort than if he were carrying one of his own lambs, lifted the stone upon his shoulders and turned his steps towards the Rhône. And great cries of joy broke out from the crowd as they followed him.

But he, deaf to acclamations as he had been to reproaches, walked on, passed the western gates of the ramparts, and came to the river-bank at the foot of the great rock; and there he laid down the stone, knelt before the prelate, and begged for a blessing upon that which was to be the first foundation of the bridge.

Wild with joy, the people pressed around the miraculous child, to kiss his garments and to see, face to face, the messenger of Heaven; and the bishop gave him five hundred golden sous wherewith to begin building the bridge. "And we will give each our offering," shouted the good people of Avignon, "to help in the work of God."

But Reuben the Jew was angry because he had taken but three deniers from one who could now command such great wealth; and he moved away among the crowd, muttering that this child was a sorcerer who had cast a spell upon the bishop and all the people, and that the bridge was going to ruin his legitimate trade. But the Jew's growling drew upon him nothing save blows, and he slunk off, to hide, in the depths of the Ghetto, his ruin and his shame.

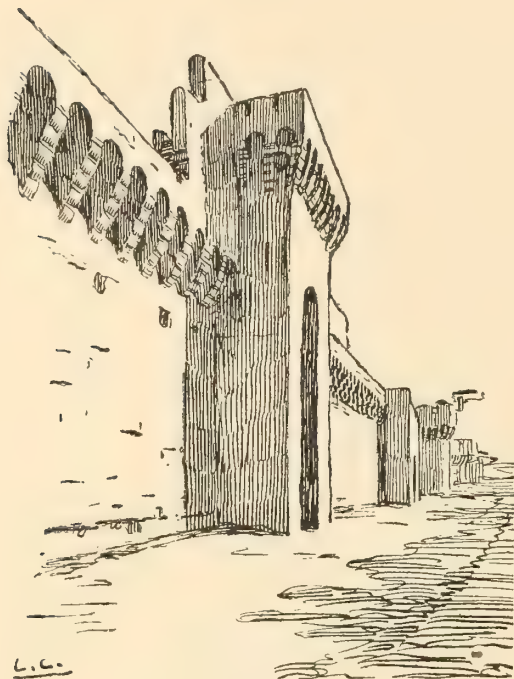
Meanwhile the time passed. Aided by generous offerings from the town, and by a group of brave workmen who called themselves the Bridge-Builders,¹ the humble shepherd raised the majestic bridge that unites Avignon and Villeneuve.

When God called Bénézet to Himself before his twentieth year, there had risen already above the water fifteen of the nineteen arches that were to endure for so many centuries. To-day four only remain; but upon the second of them the little chapel, where the saint slept his last sleep, still rises above

¹ The Bénézet of history was doubtless a member of the brotherhood of Bridge-Builders who were descended from the Roman "Collegium Pontificum."

the waves, telling the traveller that Avignon, the city of miracles, still reposes peacefully in the shadow of the memories of its past.

Avignon, like so many other cities of Provence, lives, for the traveller, in her legends, and in her memories that go back



THE RAMPARTS.

to the days when the Roman governors ruled over the city of Avenio. One remembers the name of Flavius, slayer of his own son, whose blood, sprinkled over the withered rose-trees beneath which his martyred body lay, brought a sudden gush of quickening sap into their branches; so that, in an instant, the green leaves were embowering his head, and a rain of winter roses, red and white, fell, like mottled snow, upon the body of the martyr of Avignon.

One remembers, too, the days of the Saracen

invasion, when, on the banks of the Durance, near the spot where the bridge of Bonpas crosses the river, the army of Avignon was annihilated, and the Saracen rule was established over the city. The terrified inhabitants had called the place Maupas; but, later on, a chapel was built to commemorate the glorious death of the martyr of Avignon, and thenceforth the name was changed to Bonpas, as a remembrance that it is well

with them who have died for their country. In due time Charles Martel, who drove the Saracens from France, took the city and put all the sons of Islam to the sword ; and to this day the Rue Rouge recalls to all the inhabitants of Avignon the captivity of their town and the final triumph of the Liberator.

But it is round the palace of the popes that are gathered the greatest glories and the darkest sins of Avignon. "Who has not seen Avignon in the time of the popes," says Daudet in his delightful *Lettres de mon Moulin*, "has seen nothing. For gaiety, life, animation, succession of fêtes, never was there such a town. From morning to night it was processions, pilgrimages, streets strewn with flowers, hung with staffs of high warp, arrivals of cardinals by the Rhône, banners in the wind, galleys decked with flags, the soldiers of the pope chanting Latin at their posts, the rattles of the begging friars ; and then, from top to bottom of the houses that pressed humming about the great papal palace, like bees around their hive, there was still the tic-tac of the lace machines, the come-and-go of the shuttles weaving the gold of the chasubles, . . . the hymns of the women-warppers ; and, away above, the sound of the bells, and always a tambourine or two rattling down there towards the bridge. For with us, when the people are happy, they must dance, they must dance ; and since at that time the streets of the town were too narrow for the farandole, pipes and tambourines were posted on the bridge of Avignon, in the fresh wind of the Rhône, and there, day and night, they would dance, they would dance. . . . Ah ! happy days, happy town !"

"Sur le pont d'Avignon
Dansons dansons."

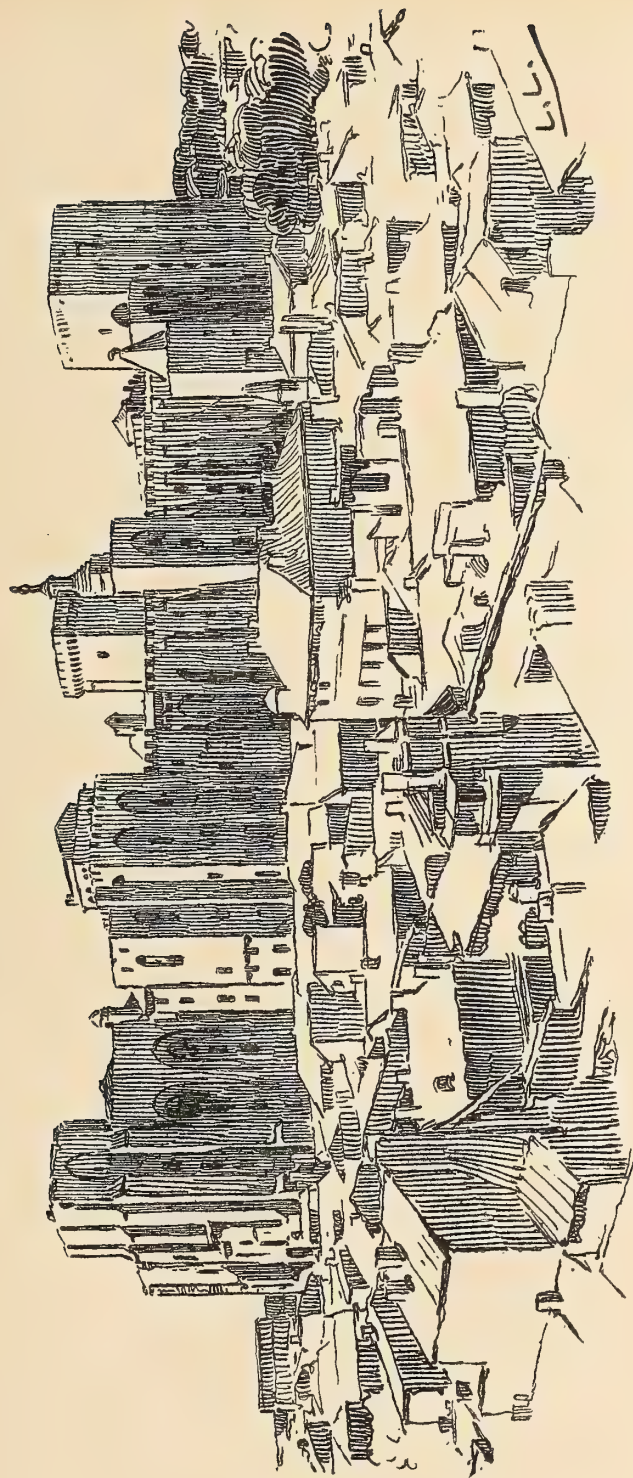
That is one side of the picture—the idyllic or romantic side. The other is this, as Alexandre Dumas has painted it. "Avignon had become the queen of luxury, of excessive indulgence and debauch . . . she had dissolute priests who touched the body of Christ with hands burning with luxury ;

she had fair courtesanes who tore the diamonds from the tiara to make them into bracelets and necklaces, and, last of all, she had the echoes of Vaucluse that cradled her luxury to the note of the soft and voluptuous songs of Petrarch." But this outburst is hardly fair to the poet. Though he himself was, perhaps, not altogether immaculate, he denounced in no uncertain terms the vices of the papal court.

The papal palace, this stupendous mass of buttressed walls, towers and machicolated battlements, impresses by reason of its extraordinary size, its magnificent position, and the memories that haunt it, rather than by any architectural beauty; but I find it, nevertheless, by far the most magnetic and attractive building in Avignon; so much so that while I am here I seem able to give little attention to anything else in the city, but must always be wandering round it, looking up at its great yellow walls, and trying to imagine the scenes that have taken place in it: the trial and triumphal acquittal of Queen Jeanne before Clement VI. in the Salle des Conclaves, then brilliant with the frescoes of Simone Memmi; the closing scenes of Rienzi's life—until the assassin's dagger ended it—and the appearance before Gregory XI. of that strangely mysterious figure, Catherine of Siena, on her mission from Florence and from Rome.

Once I visited the interior, but almost regretted that I had done so; for they show so little—and that little has been so spoiled by the soldiery whom the Government for many years barracked in the palace—that it is extremely difficult to gather, from what is to be seen within, any vivid impression of its past glories. What interested me most were the remains of the frescoes by Simone Memmi in the chapel of Clement VI., the great pope whose ten years of reign in Avignon, that he purchased and surrounded with ramparts, did so much for the glory of the town.

The cathedral of Notre Dame des Doms has also been changed out of all recognition by later alterations; but there



THE PALACE OF THE POPES.

remains much that is good. The ancient porch—once thought to be Roman, so closely has the Provençal architect adhered to the Roman traditions—is very interesting, and there still clings to it the gracious memory of Petrarch's Laura, whose portrait by Simone Memmi was once to be seen in the frescoes that have now almost vanished from the tympanum. Some of the monuments within are full of interest and beauty, notably the tombs of popes Benedict XII. and John XXII.—he who began the building of the great palace as we see it now—though this last magnificent example of florid Gothic has, beneath its canopies, many empty niches once occupied by statuettes.

Avignon is, at the present time, the centre of the literary life of Provence, as Arles is of its more characteristic national life. It is here that have been held the principal meetings of the society of Provençal writers, known as The *Félibres*, since first Roumanille, Mistral, and others made their eminently successful attempt to raise to the status of a literary medium the Provençal tongue that, almost from the days of the Albigensian troubles, had been no more than a patois.

During the comparatively quiet year preceding the crusades, troubadours and jongleurs had established in the South, during the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, a poetical literature of a merit unrivalled throughout France, and had attained for their works so general a popularity that one of them, Raimon Vidal, can say: "All Christendom, Jews, and Saracens, the emperors, kings, dukes, and counts . . . daily give their minds to singing and verse-making . . . even the shepherds in the mountains know of no greater joy than song."

The songs of the troubadours were primarily the natural Southern expression of that romantic and chivalrous idealism which, first centring itself round the crusaders, soon became a principal feature of the new Western civilisation. Possessing, as these singers did, the public ear, it was natural that almost all topics, even to the manners and vices of the times, should

come within their range; but, in days when the very Church had deified a woman, and when the noblest duty of every knight was service and devotion to his lady, there could be but one topic that they found wholly worthy of their art. That topic was love. It was as singers of love that these lyrical poets, wandering through the land of Provence in search of praise and amorous adventures—and everywhere well received and welcomed—led what the spirit of the age would hold to be an ideal existence. Little wonder, then, that they became numerous, and that a calling so congenial was adopted by so many men of noble birth, that there came to be hardly a single great family that was not connected with a troubadour. They numbered kings, even, in their ranks. Richard Cœur de Lion was among them, and one of the pioneers of the calling was Count William IX. of Poitiers. "He was one of the most courteous men in the world and a great deceiver of ladies; and he was a brave knight and had much to do with love affairs; and he knew well how to sing and to make verses; and for a long time he roamed through all the land to deceive the ladies."

Nor was it they only who were deceived, but, in many cases, the husbands also; for the fact is that most of, if not all, the heroines of the troubadours were married women. This state of affairs was not so unnatural as may appear at first sight; for, in the Middle Ages—as indeed is still the case in France—marriage brought into the quiet life of a woman a freedom she had never known during her maiden days; and, with her husband often absent in the active pursuits of fighting or hunting, it is not surprising that many a noble lady yielded to the fascinations of a wandering poet.

Sometimes the husband was indifferent, or even connived at the intimacy, but sometimes the idyll became a tragedy, as in the famous case of Guillem de Cabestanh, who, having fallen in love with the lady Margarida, was slain—so the story goes—by the jealous husband, Raimon, who cut out the poet's heart, had it roasted, and set it before his wife at dinner.

When she had eaten he told her what the dish was, and asked whether its savour had pleased her. "It was so good and savoury," she replied, "that never any other meat or drink shall take from my mouth the sweetness that the heart of Guillem has left there." Then, fleeing from her husband, she threw herself from a balcony, and died.

Another very famous troubadour was Bertrand de Born, he whom Dante met among the sowers of discord in the ninth pit of hell, carrying his own head. "Know that I am Bertrand de Born, he who to the Young King¹ gave evil counsel. I made the father and the son rebels to each other. . . . Because I parted persons thus united, I carry my brain, ah me! parted from its source, which is in this trunk."² Bertrand de Born's best known poem is a song of lamentation on the death of the "Young King."

But although the possibility of tragedy can never have been altogether absent from the more serious musings of these devotees of beauty, the lives of the troubadours afford us many a glimpse of comedy. There is Pierre de Vidal, the conceited irresistible, who, always in love with some fair enchantress, roamed through Spain, Italy, and the Midi conquering and to conquer. "Often I receive messages with golden rings and black and white ribbons. Hundreds of ladies would fain keep me with them if they could." He it was who loved Azalais, wife of Barral des Baux, and Loba, the she-wolf, for whose sake he donned a wolf's skin and bade the shepherds hunt him with their dogs; which they did with such a will that Loba came near to being the irresistible Pierre's last love.

Many another strange figure comes before us in these stories of the troubadours. There is the Monk of Montauban, who boldly arraigns the ladies of his land before God in heaven, there to answer for the trick they have of painting their faces;

¹ Prince Henry, son of Henry II. of England, whom De Born incited against his father.

² Dante's *Purgatorio*; close of Canto XXVIII.

and there is Folquet, Bishop of Toulouse, the disappointed lover, and the impassioned upholder of Montfort; and Guillem Figueira, the hater of priests; and Pierre Cardinal, who thought the world was mad; and all the lesser nameless host of jongleurs; among them those who sang the sweet love-song of Aucassin and Nicolette, and the gracious idyll of Pierre de Provence.

Let us turn for a moment from the singers to the songs. Of the simpler forms, the best known were the pastorela or shepherd's song, and the songs of the morning and evening, the alba, the aubade, and the serenade. The alba was a dialogue between the lovers; a modification of it is found in *Romeo and Juliet*, where the two debate whether the song they hear is that of the nightingale or the lark. The aubade—of which the best modern example is “Hark, hark, the lark,” in *Cymbeline*—is a monologue sung by the sentinel lover to announce the dawn. The serenade, or serena, perhaps the most gracious of all the simpler forms of Provençal poetry, was a nocturne, sung by a lover who, in view of a promised meeting, is sighing for the night.

Later on, the more artificial forms developed: the sestina, often made use of by Mr. Swinburne, in which blank verse stanzas are rhymed together; the tenso or song of dispute between two or more poets; and, commonest of all, the canzo, or lyrical love-song, celebrating the new ideal of womanhood.¹

Mr. Hueffer, to whose interesting book on the troubadours I am indebted for much of my information on the subject, gives the following amusing story of a tenzo, taken from an old record:—

“Savaric de Mauleon went to Benaugatz to see the Viscountess Lady Guillelma, and he turned his mind towards her. And he took with him Sir Elias Rudel, Lord of Bergerac,

¹ For the subject generally see Fauriel's *Histoire de la Poésie provençale*, Francis Hueffer's *The Troubadours*, also the chapter on “Aesthetic Poetry” in Pater's *Appreciations*, and the works of Gaston Paris.

and Jaufre Rudel of Blaice. All three wooed her love, and each of them had been her cavalier aforetime, but none knew it of the other. All three were seated with her, one on one side, the other on the other, and the third in front of her. Each of them gazed at her lovingly, and she, who was the boldest lady ever seen, began to look at Sir Jaufre Rudel lovingly, for he was sitting in front, and she took the hand of Sir Elias Rudel de Bergerac, and pressed it very amorously, and she put her foot on that of Sir Savaric with a smile and a sigh. None knew of the favour the others had received till they had left the castle, when Sir Jaufre Rudel told Sir Savaric how the lady had looked at him, and Sir Elias related that about the hand. And Savaric, when he heard that each of them had found such favour, became very sad; but he said nothing of what had happened to himself, but he called Gaucelon Faidit and M. de la Bacalaria, and asked them in a stanza who had received the highest favour and love at her hands."

Gaucelon and he could not agree, and the matter was referred to three ladies, whose decision, unfortunately, has not come down to us.

These more artificial forms of the lyrical poetry of Provence, especially the canzo, attained eventually to a perfection of form that—as in the case of the Northern ballades and rondels of Villon and Charles d'Orléans—was at once a charm and a danger; for there resulted from it a tendency to hackneyed phraseology and to a merely symbolic treatment even of the very lady whom the lover was addressing. It might also be urged against them that these lyrics show an indifference to nature, but, as Pater has pointed out, this is so only in a limited sense. The mediæval mind had a deep sense of the things of nature, "but its sense of them was not objective, no real escape to the world without us. The aspects and motions of nature only reinforced its prevailing mood. . . . The amorous poetry of Provence, making the starling and the swallow its messengers, illustrates the whole attitude of

nature in this electric atmosphere, bent as by miracle or magic to the service of human passion."

Such was the tenor of the troubadours' songs. From the time of their disappearance with the close of the thirteenth century, Provence, ravaged by Northern armies, was, for many centuries, in too disturbed a condition to concern itself with the arts; and when the ban of the Inquisition had fallen upon the country and the language, the Provençal dialect ceased altogether to be written, until Roumanille, Mistral, and their companions raised it once more from a condition of patois to that of a noble, literary medium.

Mr. Thomas Janvier, in his *Embassy to Provence*, has told us how Roumanille first came to write in his native dialect.

"One Sunday when he (Roumanille) was at St. Rémy his mother said to him—

"'Why, Jousè, they tell me that thou art making paper talk!'

"'Making paper talk, mother?'

"'Yes, that is what they tell me. What is it that thou art putting on the paper? What dost thou make it say?'

"'But it is nothing, mother!'

"'Oh yes, my handsome Jousè, it is something. Tell thy mother what it is.'

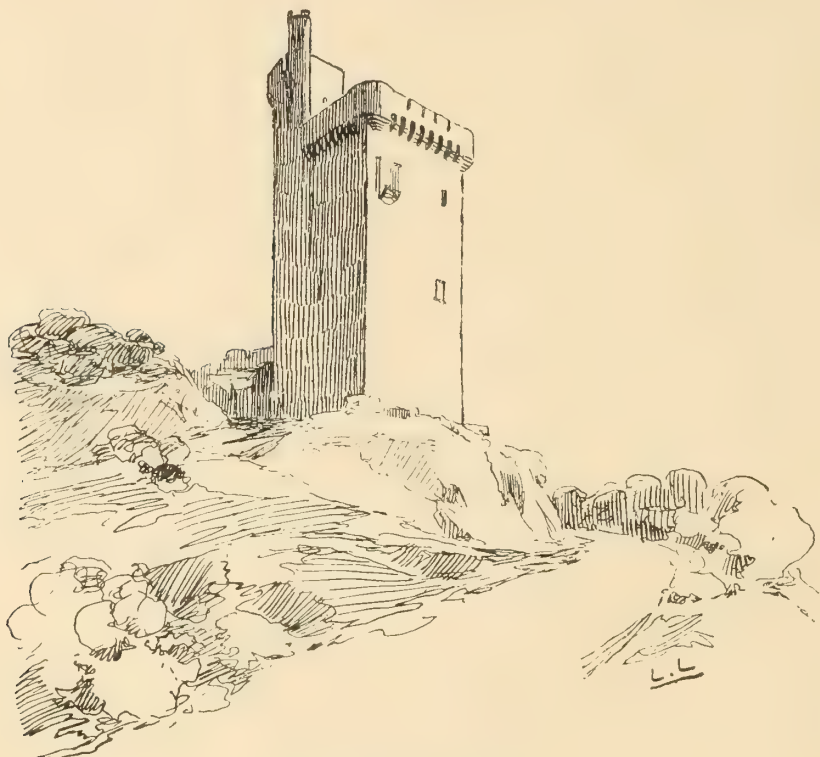
"But when he recited to her his French verses, she shook her head sorrowfully, and sorrowfully said to him, 'I do not understand!'

"'And then,' said Roumanille, 'my heart rose up within me, and cried, "Write thy verses in the beautiful language that thy dear mother knows!" That very week I wrote my first poem in Provençal, and, being at home again the next Sunday, I recited it to her. When she wept and kissed me, I knew that my verses had found their way to her heart, and thenceforth I wrote only in Provençal.'

Did ever a school of poetry more beautifully begin?

.. . . .

The distant view of Villeneuve lès Avignon, the ancient dismantled town in the valley that Pope Innocent VI. was wont to call the "Valley of Benedictions," had always attracted me. This afternoon I found myself there. The way lies over the old wooden bridge, that is now being replaced by a stone



TOUR PHILIPPE LE BEL.

one, and along the dusty road to the tower of Philippe le Bel that he built in 1305 to guard the passage of the pont St. Bénézet; thence down through the dilapidated, but always romantic, old town, up to the great, twin towers that guard the gateway of the fort St. André, that monument of the jealousy with which the kings of France looked upon the growing power

of the popes. It occupies the site of what was once the great monastery of St. André. In later years Louis XIV. used it for the purpose to which he was only too fond of putting the strongholds of France—that of a State prison. Many are the pathetic souvenirs cut on the dungeon floors with the handles of the spoons, the sharpest instruments that could be safely entrusted to a prisoner, who might be unable to resist any temptation to cheat his captors.

On this flagstone is a crucifix of the time of Louis XI., here a Gothic church, there St. George slaying the dragon, and here a sketch unfinished, because, as the guide laconically put it, “l’artiste est mort avant.” But more pathetic than all are the words written by one of the Carbonari—

N’ENTREPRENEZ RIEN
SANS ENVISAGER LA FIN
P. P. P. P.

Those four capital letters signify this : “ Pauvres Prisonniers Prenez Patience.”

Leaving the grim old fortress that frowns down upon one of the loveliest landscapes in all Provence, those were the words that came again and again to my mind, as they have come to the minds of many who, from Hamlet onwards, whether bond or free, have found the world sometimes a prison—this last invocation to one’s strongest power of endurance: “ pauvres prisonniers prenez patience.”

What a wild, unkempt town this Villeneuve, where sometimes Clement VI. came to dream ; and the cardinals to recruit in their villas, among their mistresses, after the strenuous life of Avignon. How fallen it is, how changed ! From the roof of the southern tower, the old guardian of the castle has pointed out to me building after building that, once the bearer of a great name, is now gone utterly to decay—become a warehouse, a factory, a “ Modern Bar”—what you will. The

great Monastery of Chartreuse that Innocent VI. founded, at the command of St. Bruno, who appeared to him in a vision, is now, excepting the great entrance gate and the fountain, fallen into the last stages of ruin. You wander among broken glories, by dirty alleys and back yards, through ruined Renaissance gateways, ancient cloisters of the fourteenth century, vaulted passages, and a frescoed chapel of the pope, all given



GATE OF THE FORT ST. ANDRÉ.

over now to utter desolation, and littered with stable refuse and straw. "Quelle décadence," the guide said, shaking his head sadly over the tower; and the traveller can only echo him, "Quelle décadence!"

"Voutes seculaires, sveltes colonnades decouronnées, salles silencieuses et à demi détruites où errent encore les vieux souvenirs d'antan! . . . Quand nos pas profanes font retentir vos vieux murs, O monastère en ruines, il nous semble à chaque

instant, voir fuir, sous les arceaux gothiques de vos cloîtres, des ombres fugitives qui viennent évoquer les jours de l'antique passé d'Avignon.¹

Villeneuve is as intensely interesting as it is intensely sad.

¹ *Légendes de la Ville d'Avignon*, P. Barthélémy,



CHAPTER XVI

AROUND L'ISLE SUR SORGUE

THAT ride from Avignon to L'Isle sur Sorgue, on one of the most lovely spring evenings that I remember, is a pleasant memory; for nature's own magic was in the air, and the peace of evening was about me. The road leads, at first, beneath a great avenue of plane trees, through whose trembling leaves one sees visions of distant, sunlit uplands and the twin towers of Château Renard upon their hill; thence to the bank of the Durance, at Bonpas, that was once called Maupas, because there so many men of Avignon died under Saracen scimitars.

Only a mile or so away, across the suspension¹ bridge, on the road to Château Renard, is the little walled village of Noves, where Laura is said to have been born, though Petrarch's statement that her birthplace was "at the foot of some hills" on the way from Avignon to Vaucluse seems to point rather to some farmhouse or hamlet nearer to Caumont; possibly, as some writers think, to Pieverde.

Passing through Caumont, the road winds by rich meadows and orchards, between banks on which purple iris bloom, and beside hedges that are white with masses of hawthorn flower, so sweetly scented that I linger there, with my hand always upon the brakes, lest the pleasure should pass too quickly. Indeed, in spite of the warm welcome that awaited me at the Hôtel St. Martin at L'Isle, I could not help wishing that there were another such hour's ride before me, more especially since, on that particular day, I was quite unable

¹ The Brotherhood had originally bridged the Durance at this spot.

to do justice to the efforts of Monsieur Lagorio's skilful chef, and for dinner had to content myself with a "sauge," an infusion of an herb much in favour with the people of that part of the country for "les maux d'estomac." "Beside every ill," as my host remarked, "God has planted the remedy. La sauge¹ allonge la vie." Certainly the morning found me well.

There is a warm corner in my heart for L'Isle sur Sorgue, made pleasant with great avenues of plane trees, and the cooling drip and splash of a hundred water-wheels. I like the Hôtel St. Martin, too, for though, as regards sanitation, it is not a "maison du premier ordre"—how many such are there in Provence?—it has certain attractions not to be found everywhere. In the rear is a courtyard well shaded by a river, an acacia tree, and a great sun blind that, in hot weather, is drawn across from wall to wall, so that you may eat comfortably in the open air. Behind the courtyard, on the other side of the bubbling Sorgue, that you cross by a little wooden bridge just below the mill-wheel, is a well-shaded garden, where you may stroll beside the stream and catch pleasant glimpses of the buttercups dancing in the meadows that lead away to the hills of Vaucluse.

Then—for those who may be attracted by such delicacies—there are the trout of the Sorgue, noted throughout all France. A half-dozen of them are generally to be found swimming captive in the tank that is fed from the river itself, until the time comes for them to be handed over to the skilful mercies of the chef. I have never tasted trout so good. Lastly, there is the proprietor himself, a Marseillais who welcomes all guests warmly, and has some good tales, for those who care to hear them, of Corsica, his "pays de rêve," and of the vendetta that drove him thence to the Midi.

We are honoured here to-day. Monsieur le Marquis de M—— has motored over from Marseilles to lunch, and, after coffee, has amused himself, for an hour or more, by

¹ I am not sure that the Provençal sauge is the same herb as our "sage."

firing at the wall with an air-gun—to a running accompaniment of much laughter and noisy talk among his friends. A quiet listener in the little summer-house near me looked up from his paper. “That is quite *le tempérament méridional*,” he remarked; “to be *bruyant*, not so much for one’s own amusement as for that of the *entourage*.”

The evening breeze is ruffling into tiny ripples the surface of the blue fountain of Vaucluse. There, above me, towers the great, red circling cliff from beneath whose subterranean depths this Sorgue mysteriously rises, to find itself hemmed in by fantastically-shaped boulders, overgrown with shrubs and bushes. A belated white butterfly flits among the green, a swallow circles over the surface of the pool whose current glides, slowly at first, then faster and faster, until, with a sudden curl and swirl, it falls, swishing through a faint transparency, into blue and white masses of boiling, eddying foam, that gather strength and volume again to take another thundering, hissing plunge downward from mossy rock to rock.

Away down the gorge, over the rugged, grey foreground, high above a grove of soft, green fir trees, rises the fantastic crag crowned with the ruins of the castle where Petrarch used to visit his friend Philippe de Cabassole. Immediately below it, on the other side of the stream, was the poet’s home and the garden that he tended with such delight. The scene is infinitely suggestive, infinitely sad; for though commercial enterprise has not succeeded in destroying the natural wonders of this gorge, it has vulgarised with popular cafés, and made hideous with a great factory, a spot that, for the sake of its gracious memories and extraordinary beauty, should have been kept immaculate for ever.

For there is no place on earth where one would wish to be more utterly alone, to be without any reminders of human life more modern than the little Romanesque church by the river, and the ruined castle upon the hill. Only so could one’s mind



VAUCLUSE. THE CASTLE.

range back without distraction to memories of the poet who walked this gorge all these hundreds of dreaming years ago, and of the woman who, because she was beautiful, pure, and holy, in an age when the wicked flourished like a bay tree, became his guide, his inspiration, and his one ideal realised upon earth.¹

But already the light was waning from the gorge, and the afterglow was gilding the sky. I left my seat by the pool, and followed the path downward, under wild fig trees, to where the stream, having foamed itself free of the last obstructing barrier, begins now to flow calmly, between luxurious bowers of fir, chestnut, and willow, towards the dripping mill-wheels of the village. Here the widening gorge admits a fuller light upon the water rippling deliciously between rich pastures, golden with buttercups, crimson with masses of sainfoin, and dappled with scarlet poppies that are dancing in the breeze. The shadow, as it lightened over the flowers, lightened over my spirit, too; and, for a moment, I was almost content with Vaucluse, as it is, given over to rustic lovers, to excursionists, and to automobile boats from the Café de Petrarch.

It was St. Gens, the little patron saint of Provence, who brought me to St. Didier to-day—he who made his home up there in the lonely valley, not very far from where I was yesterday, behind the hills of Vaucluse.

All the people of Provence love St. Gens, and rightly so; for is he not still mighty to help them? Did he not heal of a fever the great Mistral himself, when the doctors had been able to do nothing at all; and, to come nearer home, did he not raise my host of this very hotel, when, as a child, he had fallen from an amateur trapeze, and had lain so long unconscious that all thought him dead? Indeed he did. And as his fête is to take place soon, in the middle of the

¹ Laura was, probably, Laura de Noves, who married, in 1325, at Avignon, Hugues de Sade, by whom she had six sons and three daughters.

merry month of May, I rode over to St. Didier, which is away on the far side of the hills of Vaucluse, to make inquiries.

The ride to St. Didier from L'Isle is quite interesting. You pass through the picturesque old village of Pernes, that has fascinating relics of mediæval things, and through a charmingly undulating upland lane, whence you get beautiful glimpses over sunlit landscapes and the hills of Ventoux, until you find yourself beneath the plane trees of St. Didier, looking up the village street to the great gates of what was once the château of the Lords of Thézan.

The honours of the village were done by a charming, little, bright-eyed, garrulous boy—apprenticed to a local cuisinier—to whom I bore an introduction. I found him sitting with his mother in a cottage that was reached by a flight of steps leading from a very narrow little lane, off the main street. Questions about St. Gens at once kindled smiles, and assured me of a welcome. The mother showed me photographs and a bottle of miraculous water that came from the holy fountain. But neither she nor her son, though willing enough, could quite satisfy my curiosity; so the little cuisinier, chattering all the time, took me round the corner to M. le Curé, who knew all about St. Gens, and would tell me everything.

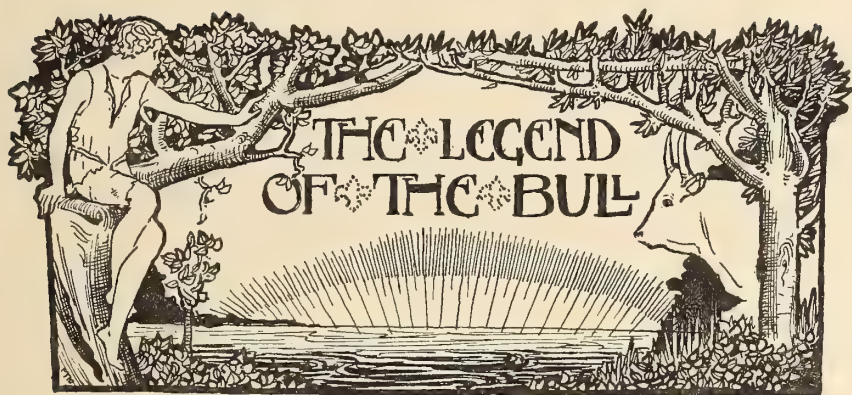
M. le Curé, big, bald, and rather untidy,—as is sometimes the way with curés hereabouts,—received me very courteously, and listened to my request for a story with a smile and a rather deprecating shrug of the shoulders—as who should say, “Ah! you English. What is St. Gens to you but a legend?” Unfortunately, he was too busy to afford me more than a doorstep interview, but he very kindly told me where I could obtain all the information I might wish for, and left me with an earnest recommendation to come and see for myself. I mean to.

The little cuisinier, still chattering,—“Comme il est bavard, ce gentil petit moulin à vent,” my hostess had said of him—escorted me back to my bicycle, telling me how pretty the

fête was, especially in the past—this child talking of the past!—before the procession had to come through St. Didier, as it does now, “all covered up, because the mayor is a Socialist, and will not allow any processions at all.” While he still chattered, we met, under the little pointed gate, which is the back way into the grounds of the château, a friend of his, Thérèse, a rosy-cheeked milkmaid, carrying two large, full pails. To her I was duly presented. She, too, began to tell me of St. Gens, and of all the miracles he had done, and how his mother, to stop him from running away, had caught hold of his arm, and how the arm had come off in her hand, and how it suddenly disappeared, and was not seen for days, until they noticed, when next they saw him, that it had grown again upon the saint’s shoulder. And these things had been remembered, she told me, these eight hundred years; and “Ah! comme c’est joli; and it is all true; it all really happened; and Monsieur must come and see for himself how very pretty it is. Au revoir, Monsieur.” Taking up the pails, Thérèse disappeared through the little pointed door.

As I rode again into the beautiful expanse of shining uplands, looking out upon the purple hills that glow, range upon range of them, until they melt into the golden west; it seemed to me that this view alone was well worth the ride to St. Didier, even though—as was far from being my case—you care nothing for little windmill cuisiniers, nor for pretty, gossiping milkmaids, nor even for their favourite saint. To-morrow I will make a pilgrimage to Monteux.

Monteux, the birthplace of St. Gens, and also of Saboly, the famous writer of Provençal Noëls, is a little town that lies in the plain a few miles south-west from Carpentras. I did not go there directly, but passed round by the village of Le Thor, because I had heard of the church there, Ste. Marie du Lac; with a beautiful Romanesque porch, and a legend that is something like this:—



Years ago, a farmer in the district possessed a beautiful white bull of whom he was very proud. It was not a fierce animal, as its kind is wont to be, but gentle and placid, with the dreamy eyes of a seer. Every evening a small cowherd used to drive the white bull, with other cattle, to drink at a pond where a great willow tree grew. And, one evening, the little cowherd noticed that the white bull was not drinking like the others, but was kneeling at the edge of the pond, with his muzzle held just clear of the water. The animal remained so for quite a long while before he drank; and the little cowherd wondered, and said to himself; "To-morrow I will watch the white bull." He did; and the same thing happened, and again the next day, and again the next.

Then the cowherd made up his mind that he would tell his master. So, in the morning, when he met the farmer, just as he was leaving the mas, he said to him, "Patron; do you know that every day the white bull prays at the edge of the pond?" And the farmer laughed at him for a little blagueur and coiner of histoires. But the cowherd persisted. "Every evening, beside the willow tree, the white bull kneels at the edge of the pond;" until, at last, the farmer thought that he would go and see for himself. So that evening he hid himself in the willow

tree, and waited until the cattle came to drink. And when he saw them coming he kept his eyes fixed upon the white bull.

The white bull walked to the edge of the pond, directly beneath the willow tree where the farmer was, and there, instead of drinking like the other cattle, he went down upon his forelegs

and put his muzzle very close to the edge of the water, though without touching it. Then, closing his large, mild eyes, he remained motionless, for all the world as though he were at prayer.

The farmer was much astonished, for never before had any of his bulls been wont to pray. And the next morning he called some of his men together, and brought them to the edge of the water. Then he made them stand a little way into the pond, and there probe its bottom with long sticks. At first they probed nothing but mud; but, after a while, one of the men cried out that he had struck upon something hard. And the farmer bade them dig round that spot; and, at last, with poles and ropes, they drew from the pond a long dark object that looked like a human figure; and when the mud had been washed from off it, behold! there was a beautiful image of the Virgin Mary.



ST. MARY OF THE LAKE.

Thenceforth they venerated the white bull; and to this day the village is called Le Taureau, or Le Thor, and the church that they built over the miraculous image is dedicated to "St. Mary of the Lake."

The miraculous image was not to be found in the church; but I discovered something that was nearly as good; for,

passing from the blinding glare and burning heat of the street, under the beautiful Romanesque porch, into the cool and quiet of that shadowy sanctuary, there stole upon my senses delicious



waves of organ music that rolled up to the vaulted roof, and fell back in showers as cooling as those that splash again into the Sorgue from the dripping water-wheels of L'Isle. Looking towards the organ, I could just discern, across the rays

that streamed from the stained-glass windows, the rapt face of a young, musician priest.

I stood quite still, listening; for I could not but feel that I was an intruder, a jarring note in the musician's harmony. Indeed, in a few moments the music had ceased; and, before the last chord had died away into silence, the priest had risen from his seat.

I approached him and expressed regret for my intrusion, telling him that his music had given me pleasure. With a rather abstracted bow he thanked me, saying—with more politeness than truth, I fear—that I had in no way incommoded him. Then he knelt very devoutly before the altar, crossed himself many times before rising, and left the church. I followed him, just in time to see the black cassock vanishing down the village street.

Leaving Le Thor, in the burning sunshine, the scene before my eyes was not Gadagne upon its hills, nor the little village with its mediæval tower; nor did I hear the song of the larks above the fields. I saw the rapt, ascetic face of a pale young priest whose hands were moving over the stops, and I heard deep chords of solemn music rolling through a shadowy church.

The church of Ste. Marie du Lac—the incident of the priest had driven it almost from my mind—is, for its own sake, well worth seeing. The building is beautiful in proportions and design, and the very classic Romanesque porch of the eleventh century is—even to the faded frescoes on the tympanum—curiously reminiscent of that at Notre Dame des Doms at Avignon.

In vain I had looked round, among the many images in the church, for any sign of the virgin of the pond, or for any memory of the bull. All the villagers whom I questioned upon the subject returned an equally blank stare, and a “*Je n'en ai jamais entendu parler.*”

From Le Thor I rode to Villeren, and thence to Monteux, by a country lane so attractive that I was in constant danger of

being upset in the cart ruts, by reason of a strong disinclination to look anywhere but around me.

The afternoon was waning into evening—a Sunday evening of May—and the golden sunlight of Provence was flooding the leafiest, loveliest of lanes. Above me the sky was melodious with the songs of the hidden poets, while, from the distance, came the shy cuckoo's note. The soft air was laden with the scent of the hawthorn, blossoming in snow-white lines to right and left; lines that broke here and there, giving place to soft green banks among whose grasses, beside the rippling stream, buttercups, and yellow marigolds were quivering in the breeze. Beyond those banks, above the stately heads of the purple and golden iris, the eye could range over fields of springing corn and bearded barley, over crimson masses of sainfoin, jewelled with scarlet poppies. I rode past a farmhouse whose dogs, goats, and sheep were wandering among brightly-painted carts, and sheds that were littered with implements of agricultural life, past a white cottage and a garden before it, massed with flowers richer even than those of the roadside for colour; then by a cherry orchard, a range of stately cypresses and a long line of tufted poplars that economical husbandry had trimmed away to the very top. Then I came to a patch of tobacco plants, with long pointed leaves, and beyond them—protected from the north by screens of long, dried grasses—to acre upon acre of strawberries, some in bloom, and some showing already the crimson fruit between the green.

All this glowing landscape was set in everlasting hills, and over it all there reigned—not, perhaps, in reality, but because “thinking made it so”—the greater peace that hallows the evening of the day of rest. It was with something of that peace in my mind that—go as slowly as I would, lest the life of the village should mar it too soon—I saw at last, above its circling trees, the ancient tower of the pope's castle rising over the birthplace of St. Gens.

The village church—a curious little early Gothic building—

has, on the apse and above the altar, some crude frescoes, representing the wolf and ox ploughing together; and other scenes from the life of St. Gens. Here, also, is the statue of the saint, that is carried twice a year in procession to the hermitage. I tried to lure into conversation the ancient caretaker who was tottering about the church, arranging the chairs, but I could get nothing from him except inarticulate gurglings; and I came to the conclusion that he was deaf and dumb. It seems a pity that a building with such interesting associations should be left to the charge of the village idiot; but perhaps he was no more than a *locum tenens*.

The village cafés were crowded with peasants; and about the walls of the narrow streets were posters announcing the approaching fête, and stating particularly that strangers would be made welcome. I wandered awhile among the streets, looked at the statue of the saint near the old gate, and rode away to Pernes, in a sunset that was gilding the edges of the young vine leaves, and purpling the rich, red earth between.

This part of the country is extremely fertile, and supplies much fruit and market-garden produce to France. The tobacco plant also does well here; but I am told that the culture of tobacco, from which the French Government, as the purchaser, derives a very large income, is decreasing hereabouts, owing to the too great zeal with which the French officials carry out their duty of seeing that every leaf grown goes to the State.

Yesterday I had occasion to run over to Arles, and there met Monsieur Mistral again, seated at the next table to mine at the Hôtel du Nord, where he was lunching with the Count and Countess of C——. What a fine dome-shaped head the poet has, and how animated his conversation is,—extraordinarily so for a man of his years. As I was leaving, he asked me whither I was bound.

“For the fête of St. Gens,” I said.

“Ah! St. Gens. It was he who cured me of a fever that

no febrifuge had prevailed against ; and, in return, I consecrated to him three verses of my *Mireille*."

"He cured you because you had faith, M. Mistral."

"Ah! it is exquisite to be healed by faith." Then, with half a smile, "You have little faith, you English!"

"Much less than we ought to have," I admitted.

"For you these legends are merely literature—and literature, ce n'est rien du tout."

"For some of us, these legends are poetry, Monsieur."

"Poetry! Ah! that is another matter. La poésie est quelque chose. When you go to Saint Gens will you say a pater for me?"

"Willingly, if it will pass in French, or in English—my Latin is somewhat rusty."

"In what language you will, so that you say it. C'est entendu. Au revoir."

Ten minutes later, I was taking coffee at a little table before one of the cafés of the Place des Hommes. Many others were doing likewise, and the square was loud with the buzz of talk. At the table next to mine, four men were playing piquet in the exuberant manner of the Midi. The most buoyant of them all was a little, alert, rotund méridional with a fiercely upturned black moustache. He was becoming wildly excited—the place fairly echoing with his ejaculations, while the others tried in vain to shout him down.

"Ha! ha! ha! attrapé, pardi, attrapé! Je vous ai bien dit. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Eh bien, non! Attendez encore. Nom de nom! . . ."

Sudden silence, a hush among the tables.

The venerable form of the poet, with a friend on either side of him, is seen to pass before the remains of the Roman column and pediment that is built into the wall of the Hôtel du Nord. They turn up the little cobble-paved street that leads from the Place to the Hôtel de Ville and St. Trophime. All eyes are turned upon the great man. For a moment not a word is

spoken. The little méridional removes from his mouth the cigar that, in the first instant of silence, he had been careful to adjust; he leans back in his chair, sends one long column of smoke curling up into the air, and says, with his eyes fixed upon the retreating form of the poet; "Il est épatant."

The others nod a solemn acquiescence; the cigar returns to its aperture, and, in two minutes, they are at it again as excitedly as ever: "Attrapé, je vous ai bien dit. Ha! ha! ha!"

The road from Arles to L'Isle sur Sorgue is quite a pleasant one. It passes through Château Renard, where, from the crest of the wooded rock, the twin towers of the ruined castle of the Counts of Provence look down upon the plain; thence, by the side of the Montagnettes, through the scented hayfields, in which the mowers and binders are at work, and through vineyards where crimson-shirted men are spraying the young leaves, from the blue cans strapped upon their backs. At each new turn of the lane there comes to me, across the vines and the flowerful meadows, a fresher sense of the golden romance that, hanging for ever about Provence, has made the very name a word of enchantment. Before the evening falls, I hear again the splashing of the Sorgue.

From the cool garden in the rear we have brought our tea out here in front of the Hôtel St. Martin, that we may see pass the cavalcade, otherwise the circus procession. For the "Cirque Pinder" has come to L'Isle, and I can no more resist its fascinations to-day than I could in childhood's days, when the bray of its orchestra would set me running half-way across my native town to gaze upon those gallant cavaliers and ladies so gaily bedight in rainbow silks and satins.

How my fancies used to feed upon the finery, the horses, and the great swaying, gilded cars in which the fairy balanced herself, high up—O ever so high up! like Esterelle tiptoeing upon the mountain-tops. How I loved the delightful ponies, the kindly, heavily rustling elephants, with impassive orientals

upon their foreheads ; the painted clown, making faces at the crowd from his cart ; and all those other gaudy mysteries that, once a year, enchanted the dreams of childhood. It was perhaps the renewal of those dreams that made the calvacade so enjoyable to me to-day, though, for its own sake, it did not lack the interest that, until we have fathomed each other and all things, can never fail when men and women meet in this world.

For this was the little comedy of the cavalcade. In the middle of the procession, at the head of the single file of riders, there passed me, upon a magnificent black horse, a woman driving before her, on a thirty-foot rein, a very graceful, chestnut mare. The girl at once arrested my attention, not so much by the perfect ease with which she sat her horse and handled the reins of the leader, as by her great beauty and her royal air. She was lithe and graceful in figure, and was attired in a perfectly fitting dark-blue riding costume, worn as only French-women can wear their clothes. As she passed, erect, motionless as a statue, and proud as a queen on a triumphal progress, I let my eyes follow her out of sight. With the return of the procession along the village street she reappeared, haughty and unbending as ever, the head still held high, not deigning a glance upon the staring villagers.

"Yet sometimes you descend from your throne," I said to myself—and at that very moment, while she was passing me, behold a wonder ! The eyes turned for a moment in my direction, the firm-set lips relaxed, and their corners turned up into a smile that, though disdainful, was still a smile. Then the royal head bent into the very least of bows, and the queen spoke, in a low, clear voice that had a ring of mockery in it—

"Monsieur Bertrand est donc fatigué." The smile vanished, the head straightened, and she passed, sphinx-like as ever. I looked round to see who the tired one might be ; and, by a certain redness, and a self-conscious smile, identified him easily enough as a young, and rather handsome, man who was lounging

against the door-post of the hotel. To loose a shaft at him, the Goddess had come that little way towards earth.

That was why I went to the show in the evening. I found it good of its kind, though the most pleasing part of the spectacle was not the performance itself, but rather the strangeness of the scene at the entrance. There the naphtha lamps were flaming upon the gaudily painted, curtained arch of wood that formed the entrance; and were throwing lurid, flickering lights upon picturesque groups of wondering, chattering peasants, and upon the loose folds of the stable tents that were flapping in the evening breeze. From within came snorting, stamping, the reek of horses; and glimpses of white legs and whisking tails, for the more adventurous spirits who dared to peep. Broken snatches of conversation in two languages—for this circus is English-owned—were mingled with the buzz of the crowd. Through it all I could hear the bubbling of the Sorgue, and the moaning of the wind in the trees around.

“Marcelle! Marcelle! viens vite regarder les chevaux.”

“Oh! ne pleure donc pas, Yvonne; il ne te fera de mal.”
Then, in a gruff whisper—

“It’s Maggie I’m afraid of. She lay down twice to-day. We thought she’d got the gripes.”

“Qu’est-ce qu’elle a donc, Yvonne?”

“O, c’est qu’elle a peur de l’éléphant, la pauvre petite.”

Yvonne’s head was hidden in her mother’s skirts. I elbowed my way inside.

But the Goddess did not appear.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FÊTE OF GENS

THIS old house trembles before the mistral, and there is a mighty roaring in the plane trees of the garden. Clouds of dust are in the air; invisible, impalpable, wandering particles that lodge in the corners of your eyes, and there smart and tingle. Everywhere are heard groanings, creakings, and howls of demon fury. All nature is straining at her bonds. One would say that it had been snowing in the night, so thickly has the acacia blossom, stripped from the great tree above, been drifted on to the gravel of the courtyard; and, in the road outside, the furry down from the plane tree fruit is being whirled in brown clouds over the paths. To-day I am going to St. Didier; but it must be by train as far as Pernes.

The good people of St. Didier are not encouraging on the subject of this fête to-day—not one of them; from the inn-keeper to Madame la Comtesse who lives in the “*belle maison bourgeoise*,” a little below the inn, where the pink roses are blooming over the garden fence. This lady tells me that the spring celebration is nothing at all compared with the fête in September, and that much of the charm of what remains is lost now that the procession has to pass veiled through St. Didier. But no matter. What there is to be seen, we will see. Moreover, St. Didier is worth coming to for its own sake. Surely, never in my life have I walked through richer hayfields or by more luxuriant hedges than this afternoon, down there in the fields towards the sunset.

Before dinner I went for a stroll round the scene of

to-night's rejoicings, and on the way home looked into the great courtyard of the château that is now a hydropathic establishment. While I stood beneath the Renaissance gateway, a tiny little maid, angelically beautiful, as are so many children of this land, stepped down from a heap of stones upon which she had been playing, and, coming very close to me, looked up calmly into my face, and, with the utmost self-possession, lisped out in baby French: "Comment vous appelez-vous?" For a few moments mingled surprise and admiration bereft me of speech. I could only look down at her dumbly. With a shade more of authority in her voice she repeated the question: "Comment vous appelez-vous?"

I told her my name, which, at the third attempt, and with a little victorious smile, she repeated fairly correctly.

"Why do you wish to know it, little one?" She looked up again. "Afin que je puisse le dire à ma mère."

"And what will your mother do with my name when you have told it to her?"

"Je crois qu'elle va l'inscrire dans un carnet," lisped out the treble. At that moment her little brother—almost as pretty as his sister, and equally small—ran up from beneath the inner gateway, and took her hand.

"Viens jouer," he said, "viens jouer;" and together they trotted off. From the shadow of the arch, she turned, and, with a note of triumph in her voice, called back to me, "Bonjour, Monsieur All - eyne - All - eyne - All - eyne." There must be, in St. Didier, at least one mother who is proud of her children.

Above the village, before the little café, with the barn opposite to it, that marks the boundary between the parishes of St. Didier and Beaucet, the chairs for to-night's assemblage were all set out beneath the old walnut tree, and two peasants, in black blouses, were down upon their knees, putting the last touches to the fireworks with which, twice a year, they do honour to St. Gens. Near the fireworks stood something shaped like a tub standing on end, and covered with a white

material decorated with golden crosses. This is the saint's pedestal. It is all garlanded with white acacia blossom.

On either side of the valley rise the green terraced hills between which the white road winds up to the village of Beaucet, that shines there in the distance like a great castle from its rock. It was up into the heart of this valley, beyond Beaucet, that the young hermit fled from Monteux to the peace of a life with God.

In two hours the procession commemorating that flight will be here. Meanwhile, here is the story of St. Gens.

THE LEGEND OF ST. GENS

The child who was to become the patron saint of Provence was born in 1104, at Monteux, of humble, pious parents, who, seeing from the first that he was a boy of unusual beauty, called him Gens, that is to say, fair or gracious. Before he had been long in this world they knew also, with great delight, that in their son the moral gifts had been added to the physical; for he showed from the first a great sweetness of disposition, a precocious intelligence, and so great a piety, that, many a time, even in his earliest years, he would escape the watchful eyes of his parents, and trip away to the church, where his virtuous mother would find him repeating and chanting the naive prayers and hymns that he had learned at her knee. And so, as he grew to boyhood—though he began to help his father to till the fields, and to take his share in the work of the household—Gens was from the beginning a dreamer and a seeker after God; and, when the night came, not even the toils of the day could keep him from long hours of prayer.

Sometimes, when he was tending his father's cattle at the pasture, and the beasts were resting, he would gather around him his little comrade shepherds, and speak to them of the way of life; and so, for a while, his days passed peacefully enough, until, one summer, there came, as there comes even now too

often in Provence, a great drought that plunged all the country into misery. Now, when that happened, it was the custom of the people of Monteux to endeavour to obtain the rain they craved for by taking the bust of St. Raphael from its chapel near by, and plunging it into a neighbouring stream, in the hope that the angry archangel would avenge the insult by an



ST. GENS AND THE WOLF.

inundation. Now Gens saw the wickedness of this heathen practice, and how small respect it showed for St. Raphael, and he spoke to the people of Monteux as they gathered to witness the immersion.

"If you want rain," said he, "do penance; otherwise the drought will continue;" and when all the people smiled mockingly, Gens took the bust of the archangel and broke it

into a thousand pieces; then, raising his arms to heaven, he cried: "O people of Monteux! until you have done penance there will fall no more rain upon your land." And they were very angry; and they took him and put him in prison for three days; and when he was set free, he led his cows to pasture as usual, but all the boys who were his friends of yesterday threw stones at him as he went.

Then Gens knew that the day he had so long dreamed of had come, when he might leave the home of his birth, even as Christ had done, to serve God, far away from the world. He took his wallet and the two cows that his father had given him, and he placed upon them a little plough, a rake, and some other simple tools of husbandry; and with a last look back, and a tear for the dark days that were to come upon his native town, he set forth. And for three years not one drop of rain fell upon Monteux.

St. Gens, guided always by a mysterious voice that spoke to him from within, wandered among the hills, and passing through a beautiful valley, came at last to a great castle¹ upon the crest of a rock, and beyond that again to a deep and lonely gorge among terrible cliffs, and hemmed in by a great mountain that rose before him. Here in this valley, that the peasants called the great wood, because of the goodly trees that grew there, St. Gens built an altar of stones upon the ruins of an ancient monastery; and every day he decorated the altar with wild flowers, and so, with much prayer and with great inward joy, he entered upon his solitary life with God. He passed his days, sometimes in ploughing with the two oxen, or in sowing the plot of land that he had chosen, and sometimes in prayer and in meditation.

One day, when he was deep in prayer, a great, fierce wolf sprang upon one of the cows that were feeding near him and tore it to pieces before St. Gens had time to save it. But he, fixing his eyes upon the wolf, and raising them thence to

¹ The castle of Beaucet, the ruins of which still dominate the village.

heaven, commanded the savage beast to come to his feet, and there to implore pardon; and immediately the wolf obeyed, and, gentle as a lamb, came before the saint, who taking the harness from the dead cow, put it upon the now tame beast's neck, and, wolf and cow drew the plough, side by side.

But the people of Monteux were in the pangs of a great drought, and in their trouble they turned to the little Gens. But where was he to be found? for already his sorrowing mother had sought him long and vainly. So the people held counsel together, and they decided to send Berthe—that was his mother's name—and two counsellors with her, to seek him over hill and vale. And so Berthe went to Carpentras, and there, on her knees before Notre Dame de Santé, a new hope arose within her; and, drawn by an irresistible power, she came to the great castle, and beyond it, to the lonely valley in the hills whose rocks echoed her appealing cries; and at last—oh, bonheur!—she saw before her the little plot of earth where the wolf and the cow were drawing the plough before her son. You may see the very spot to-day, where the paths diverge before the great rock; and you may read upon the little oratory that marks it, its name, “Le Chemin de la Rencontre.”

And when mother and son had kissed one another, she fell at his feet, and begged him to return, telling him how they were calling his name in the streets of his unhappy town; and after a moment's prayer apart, to know what the will of God might be, he consented to return.

But now the mother, worn out by fatigue and emotion, grew faint, and a burning thirst was consuming her. She cried out for water, and there was none within half a league. Then the saint, raising his eyes to heaven, laid two fingers upon the rock, and behold! two streams, one of water and one of wine, sprang forth from under his touch, and the astonished mother, thanking God, quenched her thirst. Then, lest the

good gifts of God be wasted, she bade her son stop the flow of wine. Gens did so; and that is why only the water plashes from the fountain to-day.

Then St. Gens gave back to his mother the cow that his father had given him, and, accompanied by the wolf that, more devoted now than any dog, preferred to share his master's fortunes rather than to resume the free life, followed the happy mother and her companion back to his native place. Hardly had he set foot in the territory of Monteux, than all the bells of the town, swung by unseen, angel hands, broke out into joyous peals, and all the little children—even those who, until that day, had never learned to lisp so much as a word—raised a treble chorus, "Long live our saviour St. Gens!" And all the inhabitants of Monteux, priests, lords, and peasants; young maidens and old men, marched out with music to meet him.

In response to their prayers and groans, he fell upon his knees, praying to God that the longed-for rain might come, and rising, ordered the whole company to follow him round the circuit of their lands, intoning the while such prayers as the Church prescribes. And behold, almost before even the procession was formed, clouds were gathering in the sky, and before the circuit was made, the healing rain was streaming upon the parched fields, and all the town was acclaiming St. Gens.

But, with the return of prosperity, the people, as their wont is, forgot their benefactor, and renewed the heathen practices that aroused once more the anger of the saint; so that, his reproaches unheard, and he himself again attacked, he forsook, for ever, the faithless city of his birth. Some say that, before returning to the lonely valley, he made pilgrimages to Rome and to the tombs of the saints, but, be that as it may, truth is that he soon found his hermitage again, and entered once more upon a life of utter detachment from earthly things.

No animal has he now, nor plough, nor tool to help him henceforth. He will live upon forest roots and wild fruits of

the earth, and for garment he will wear only a smock falling to the knees, and fastened about the waist with a narrow belt, from which hangs a rustic wooden cross. He will go bare-headed and bare-foot.

There St. Gens lived for yet a few years, in golden dreams, and mystic talk with heaven, his thoughts turned ever towards God, and towards Death the deliverer; while day by day he worked at his tomb, hollowing it from the solid rock. It was here that God accorded to him a favour greater than any others that had hitherto glorified his hermit life; for once, at daybreak, a little before sunrise, after a day and a night passed in prayer, he saw glowing before him a light brighter than any dawn, and within it, surrounded by a host of shining angels, and borne upon a diaphanous snow-white cloud, the Virgin-mother herself, who, holding the Holy Child in her arms, bent down to the saint and gave him the little hands to kiss.



So the holy life grew to its close. Worn as he was by penance and fasting, and feeling the approach of death, he had scarcely the strength to make his way to Beaucet to receive his last communion. Thence, joyful though weary, he crept back to his hermitage, laid himself down in the tomb that his own hands had hollowed in the rock; and there, before

the homage of the birds of the air, who sang the miserere over his dying body, he gave up his soul to God.

It was the 16th of May 1127. St. Gens was twenty-three years old.

Many strange events followed upon his death. The shepherds in the hills around saw a wonderful light descending upon the hermitage; the wolf left Monteux, where it was wont to wander freely like a dog, and came to guard its master's tomb; and again the unseen, angel hands swung the bells of his town. All the people went forth to view the body, and behold! it exhaled a sweet perfume.

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On the way up through the village to the little café by the walnut tree, where the halt is made, I met, under the church tower, my friend the little cuisinier, who greeted me with much affability. He was very proud in the possession of a "bomb" with which he intended to take his part in the reception of St. Gens; and he looked at it, and fingered it lovingly all the way up the lane, aiming sometimes as though to throw. I saw the danger, and counselled him to wait. Too late. Suddenly, with all his might, he has thrown it upon the road. Flash! Bang! It has exploded beautifully. The watchers at the café take it for the arrival signal, and answer by discharging a rifle. My cuisinier's joy is full, but I am a little anxious lest he should get into trouble. Luckily, at that very moment, I see, turning the corner of the village street, a horseman followed by two carts. It is the procession from Monteux.

In the first of these carts is St. Gens covered with a cloth; in the second is the cortège. Immediately on crossing the boundary between the two parishes—which is some fifty yards on the St. Didier side of the little café—the procession stops. The men, clothed in the traditional costume of short, buff-coloured breeches and nankin gaiters, and wearing white-spotted orange handkerchiefs knotted over the ear, descend, lift down the statue, and uncover it, revealing a gilded figure

of the saint under a canopy supported by four posts that are hung with flowers.

"Vive St. Gens!" cries the little crowd that has already gathered to welcome the procession; "Bang! bang!" reply the pistol-shots; and, in a moment, the bearers had seized the carrying-poles, and, running with all their speed,—a symbol of the flight of St. Gens from Monteux,—they have placed the saint upon his flowery stand.

Gradually, with the nightfall, the crowd grows larger; there are villagers of both sexes and of every age, there is a group of visitors from the *établissement*. We all sit and drink coffee at tables under the walnut tree, where the little building shelters us from the cool wind. Red Chinese lanterns are lit round the saint; a low buzz of conversation arises. But the little cuisinier is very quiet. He is sad because the numbers present compare so ill with those of previous years, and two or three times I hear him whispering to himself, "*Ça diminue, ça diminue; je comprends.*" But, for all that, the crowd increases every moment, and, fortunately, the mistral, which is keeping many away, and threatened, at one time, to ruin the evening's rejoicings, has died down to a gentle breeze.

Now a group is gathering round the statue; some pressing close, to read by its light the words of the hymn that rises, hesitatingly at first—until they get the swing of it—then with full-voiced unanimity, into the silence of the night—

"A l'honneur de san Gen
Canten touteis ensen
Aqués pious cantiquou
Que counten san façoun
L'historou magnifiquou
De sei santeis action." ¹

¹ To the honour of St. Gens
Let us sing altogether
This pious song
Which contains simply
The magnificent story
Of his holy actions.

Listening to the music, I watch the rosy glow flickering upon the peasants' faces. Away, above the trees and the uplands, the last rays of the after-glow still linger in the sky: the first stars are peeping out; and one great planet shines majestically. Over the hills, on the other side of the valley, another light waxes every moment stronger—'tis the moon nearing the crest. The music dies away into silence. "Vive St. Gens!"—a great shout goes up from the people.

Then the bearers remove the saint from his stand and hold him high in the air while we all pass under, in procession; again, and again, because with the third time his blessing will surely come upon you. Such a varied line of heads passing from the light under the shadow of the canopy! Next to me the fair hair of the little cuisinier—now, for once, quite silent—bald heads of men, and of old women, bound in white handkerchiefs; Arlesian coiffures, the veiled heads of nuns, the white locks of the aged curé of the lycée, and the beautiful chevelures of young girls close beside the trowsled hair of their lovers. Here and there one's hand rests almost involuntarily upon the curly head of a little child. Together we pass beneath St. Gens.

The saint is back upon his pedestal, and once more the hymn breaks out. A sudden beam of soft light, from above, causes me to look up; and there, her face veiled in black laces which are the boughs of the topmost bushes, the silver moon, rising over the hill, pours down her light upon the scene.

"Lou perdoun eis ouver
Ei pu gran criminer;
Per gagna l'indulgençou
Foou estre dispousa
A faire penitençou,
Asourti dou pecca."¹

¹ Pardon is offered
To the greatest criminals,
To gain indulgence,
One must be ready
To do penance,
To depart from sin.

The hymn closes. "Vive St. Gens! Vive St. Gens!" Again the procession passes beneath the saint, and the round moon, now fully risen over the hill, floods all the silent valley with the silver blessing of the night.

Bang! bang! the bombs are speaking. With a hiss and a swish, two rockets whizz into the air, and their shining stars come quivering down in a crimson shower across the moon. Now the catherine wheels turn, and, in the little garden, the Roman candles spout, and the white and red bengal lights glare out, throwing upon the forms and faces of the peasants a lurid glow, soon dimmed in curling wreaths of smoke. But the fires wane; and the boom of the last bomb leaves the small boys free to the happiness of throwing squibs among the stragglers on the outskirts of the crowd.

The people have gathered round the statue for the last hymn, and I draw near them, to look more closely at the faces so strikingly revealed in the red light of the lamps. One girl's face, in particular, attracts me by its regular beauty and the devout seriousness of its expression. She is a blonde—a somewhat rare type in Provence—delicately featured, with pale skin, blue eyes, and abundant fair hair, over which a black lace veil is thrown in a manner so Spanish that, had she been a brunette, I should have judged her to be of that nationality. Her bearing and expression denote a refinement that raises her above the peasantry. She is dressed in black.

"Who is that lady leading the singers?" I ask of the little cuisinier.

"She is a demoiselle who lives near here. Her mother died six months ago. She is very kind to the villagers."

Again the hymn—

" Vous, que toutei leis ans
Visita aqueou gran San
Marcha dessu sei traçou
Imita sei vertus

Vous oubtendra la graçou
D'estre un jour deis elus." ¹

At that moment one of the bearers approaches me with a plate in his hand. As my coin drops into it, he says, "St. Gens vous le rend." 'Tis the formula with which all gifts on that night are received.

The last note of the hymn dies away. The bearers lift the image from its pedestal, adjust their shoulder-straps, and forcing their way through the crowd that throngs about them, amid echoing shouts of "Vive St. Gens!", headed by the rider, they disappear along the moonlit road that leads up the valley to Beaucet. The last squib fizzes and bangs in the lane. The villagers troop home to their beds.

As for me, being in no mood for sleep, I went for a walk up the valley, accompanied by the little cuisinier and his smaller brother, both of whom babbled unceasingly of their school-time, of their lessons, of I know not what. For I did not listen very attentively. I watched the moonlight sleeping upon the eternal hills, and dreamed idle dreams of St. Gens.

Early in the morning—not really early in the morning, but early for me, who am not matinal—I made my way up the valley towards Beaucet, under a cloudless sky in which, already, the sun shone so fiercely that my eyes could hardly bear the glare of the scarlet poppies flaming in the wheat that bordered my way, nor the light upon the olive-clad hills. Slowly there grows before me the village of Beaucet, perched upon its rock. 'Tis here that St. Gens took his last communion, and it is in the ruins of its old castle—so the little cuisinier tells me—that sleeps o' nights the hermit of the miraculous fountain—he who lives, all year long, high up in the valley beneath the hills.

¹ You who every year
Visit this great saint,
Walk in all his ways,
Imitate his virtues;
He will obtain for you the grace
To be one day among his elect.

A steep, stony path skirts the village of Beaucet, and winds through a narrow gorge between the hills. In a few moments I see at the foot of the bank below me—for the path is not quite at the bottom of the gorge—a mass of rock projecting from the ground, and guarded by four black cypresses. The surface of the rock slopes forward to the foot of the bank, and hollowed in it is a coffin-shaped depression, the bed in which, during his sojourn in this valley, St. Gens used often to sleep; sometimes, on nights of penitence, head downwards. To this day, the pilgrims, both men and women, passing up to the hermitage at these times of fête, lay themselves, one by one, in his bed, head downwards, as the saint was wont to do.

While I sit for a moment upon the bank, a village cart drawn by an old, white horse approaches, and halts before the rock. A white-kerchiefed, wrinkled old woman descends, followed by a younger woman with a little boy. The elder one remains in the lane; the other two descend the bank to the rock, kneel in the bed, and there pray, with bent heads.

I leave them and pass on to St. Gens, a curious collection of buildings near the head of the terraced valley, where it is hemmed in by the mountain range. I am only just in time; for, as I approach, I overtake the procession that is winding its way towards the church. It is headed by the women pilgrims, who are followed, first by the men, and then by St. Gens, whose golden head I can see rising and falling to the tramp of the bearers. After the saint come the priests; two in black vestments, and one in white robes embroidered in gold, with a golden sun upon the back. Behind him are two acolytes in scarlet and white, and, in the rear, a peasant in a black blouse, carrying the Christ, a crucifix that is brought up here from St. Didier very early in the morning.

The procession files into the little church, which has evidently been largely rebuilt on to the remains of an early Romanesque chapel. The children sing, very lustily, their hymns in honour of the saint. The service over, many of the

congregation move to the little side chapel, where the tomb of St. Gens is hewn out of the rock,—the spot marked by an effigy of him lying with his wolf. Others gather before the altar, where, one by one, they kiss the feet of the little golden image that the priest brings to them, wiping it with a cloth after each kiss. Another group of women and children surrounds the statue from Monteux, which is now at rest in the transept; and here is more kissing of feet, and some wet eyes, too, and clinging hands. For the saint has worked many miracles upon the pilgrims to his shrine; as is attested by the crutches, and other ex-voto offerings and testimonials with which the walls of the church are hung. Here, for example, is the signed story of Seraphine, who, when she was deadly sick of a fever, promised to bring a good gift to the saint, and to make a pilgrimage to his tomb, if he would but cure her. He did so; and now Seraphine has vowed to live a Christian life, “so that she may meet St. Gens in heaven.”

All the pilgrims troop off to lunch; some beneath the shade of the trees on the slopes of the valley, and some at the wooden tables in the rough, open shed that adjoins the little café. Nearly all of them have brought their own provisions—for there is little enough to be had here, except bread and wine—and so, for a while, there is much talking, much eating and drinking, until, gradually, the after-luncheon lethargy comes upon them, and leaning forward upon the table, their heads sunk upon their arms, one after another they drop off to sleep.

The grand magazin, the shop, embowered in white roses, where, they tell me, I can purchase a souvenir of St. Gens, is not yet open, and I am told to inquire at the *dépôt des bagages*, a large barn-like building opposite, within which a long row of clerical hats, and a lively clatter of knives and forks from a door at the end of the corridor, indicate that I have invaded the refectory. At last, without, I hope, unduly disturbing their Reverences, I unearthed my shopkeeper, who was apparently finding the occupation of *garçon* more profitable or more

congenial than her legitimate employment. She consented, however, to accompany me across the way to the magazin, which she opened; and the fact that it was immediately thronged with eager buyers did not appear to occasion in her either surprise or concern. But for my summons, it would have remained shut. Such are the ways of the Midi.

Having made my purchases, I strike at random up the steep path that leads towards the head of the valley and to my goal—the miraculous fountain. There comes towards me an old peasant woman holding a bottle in her hands; and, seeing therein a sign that she can direct me, of her I ask my way.

“Vous suivrez le sentier jusqu’à un certain endroit, et puis vous tournerez à gauche,” says the old lady, and hurries on; leaving it to my powers of divination to identify the “certain endroit” when I shall come to it.

This must be it, where the gorge is cleft in two by a great wedge-shaped mass that has been thrust down into it from the mountains ahead, and the path diverges, right and left, before the “Cross of Meeting”; for this is the spot where the mother first heard her son’s voice respond to the name with which she had been awaking the echoes of this lonely valley; here she took him to her arms again. I continued to follow the left-hand path—climbing, stumbling, climbing again—until, at last, engulfed in an inland island of rock, with the sheer cliffs above me, and retreat the only escape, I begin to realise that my informant, perhaps already a little intoxicated by the mystical virtues of the holy water, had said “left” when she meant “right”—assuming always that I had interpreted correctly her somewhat oracular directions.

No course but retreat is open to me; so I return, stumbling and sliding down among the loose stones of the path, before making a bold upward detour to the left towards the cross that has been erected on the rock above the place of meeting; for I judge that from that eminence I may be able to discover

my lost fountain. The cross gained, a most magnificent view rewards me. There to the north is the whole gorge and valley opening out to the plain, and across it, in the far distance, the Luberon hills and Ventoux, at whose base shines the city of Carpentras. Turning, here below me is the bend of the divided valley, and, at the head of it, a monumental stone. There, where the old man in the blue blouse is kneeling, at the foot of the cliff upon whose side the bushes wave in the wind, must be the healing fountain itself. Yes! for see! he is filling a bottle; now he bends to drink, and now he is praying with folded hands.

Standing motionless upon the cliff-path, I watch him. Long he prays and crosses himself, turning to each of the four cardinal points. Then he picks up his hat, and, with a last reverence to the fountain, turns towards the hermitage, and stumbles away down the stony path. Every few yards he stops to remove his hat, to bend again, and pray. I move on. Far above him though I am, he hears my footfall, and, looking up, with a startled movement, sees me perched upon the cliff-side. He marches on, halting no more. Feeling guilty as a detected eavesdropper, I descend the path.

Here is the fountain that St. Gens summoned from the rock. I sit beside it and listen. The drip, drip, drip of the water, and the cry of a bird above the cliff, are the only sounds to be heard; then, suddenly, distant voices and laughter. No long quiet, even here!

The voices ring louder; in this pent-up valley all sounds are doubled—I can hear every word. Three young peasants, accompanied by two girls, come to the fountain. One of them sets his bottle to fill, while a companion talks to him. The two girls and the third man mount the steep path towards the cross that I have just left. He calls down to his friends—

“Nous commençons le chemin de la croix.”

“C’est épatant.” Much laughter; and a retort, for the girls’ benefit.

"Gare à vous, la haut, Madeleine, il y a des serpents—et ils courent." Mademoiselle's reply—courageous rather than academic—comes ringing down the gorge like the note of a bell—

"Je m'en fiche."

The three are clinging to the cross, silhouetted against the blue sky. How differently do old and young honour the patron saint of Provence!

I rattled back along the stony lane, and tired by the wind, the sun, and the mosquitoes, was glad to find myself at St. Didier again. Content to be utterly lazy, I drank tea before the inn, and, lost in a day-dream of St. Gens, became quite unconscious of what was passing around me, until I awoke to find myself in the midst of a village in full fête. Behind me, in front of the little post-office, fifty couples were dancing to the music of a band, beside which a gaudy roundabout was spinning the girls and boys upon golden horses and in golden cars; all the street was in shade, and the setting sun glinted upon the leaves of the plane trees. Before it had sunk behind the distant hills I was back in L'Isle sur Sorgue.

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Although the excellence of this cuisine, the trout from the Sorgue, the unremitting attentions of my host—pleasant as they are—do not yield the secret of its fascinations, I shall certainly look back upon the days spent in L'Isle sur Sorgue as among my most grateful memories of Provence. Perhaps that secret is to be found rather in the peacefulness of the place to a, sometimes, way-worn traveller; in the quiet of this little summer-house where I can write at my ease beside the splash of the fountain, and of the cool river babbling to its water-wheels; in the tangled beauty of the garden across the little rustic bridge, where the wandering wind makes minstrel melody among the plane trees. Yes! in these is the secret.

Let the sun burn as it may, as it does at this moment, upon the dusty white road in front ; at L'Isle there is always freshness, and a repose that makes every day a Sunday. I should be entirely happy here, were it not for the flies and . . . and . . . and . . .

I repeat that here I *should* be entirely happy.



CHAPTER XVIII

THE CITY OF DREAMS

“ Les Français qui mes vers liront
S'ils ne sont et grecs et romains
Au lieu de ce livre ils n'auront
Qu'un pesant faix entre les mains.”

PIERRE DE RONSARD.

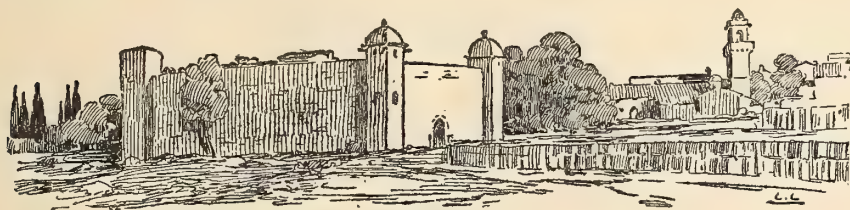
THOSE lines express exactly the spirit in which all who would understand her must come to Arles. Bring to her all that you have of Southern sympathy, and she, in her turn, will reveal to you her secret, which is the secret of Provence.

But, woman that she is, however much the truth may burn upon her lips, she will not tell it to you all at once; not before, by first giving her your own, you have won her confidence. Then, in some chosen spot, perhaps before the stone saints of St. Trophimus, or beside you, beneath the moonlit columns of the theatre, she will whisper her story into your ear. When once you have heard it, you will be her friend always.

During the first days of our meeting I passed upon her the hasty judgments that we are too prone to pass upon mere acquaintances. I stood before the arènes, and, looking up at the majestic pile, I thought that Arles must be a Roman town; I wandered among the tender ruins of the theatre, and straightway Arles became Greek to me; I stood before St. Trophimus, and I was in a Christian city, tinged with the subtle mysticism of the East. Thence I wandered through the streets to where the Rhône, the river of Provence, was swirling between its banks; and, on the way, I saw Renaissance gateways and

Gothic arches, and, beside them, women whose beauty was perpetuating, in warm flesh and blood, the cold tradition of the stones. Then I began to realise that Arles was neither Roman altogether, nor Greek altogether, but that she was wholly Provençal, and, almost, altogether lovely.

But before setting down in more detail my impressions of this, the brightest jewel in the crown of Provence, I must record my visit to Montmajour, the sombre mass comprising a twelfth-century abbey church of the Benedictines, a mediæval donjon tower with crenelated battlements, and, dominating the whole, a great, barrack-like, ruined twelfth-century palace of the lords of Fontvieille, all piled upon the nearest of the rocky,



FOUGQUES. FORTIFIED COURTYARD.

fir-clad hills that rise above the plain, two miles away, along the dusty road eastward from Arles.

The concierge was at siesta in his little house, but his wife unearthed him to take me the round of the buildings. We enter the church and descend into the tenth-century chapel, much of which is hollowed out from the solid rock. I do not, somehow, find it either interesting or attractive; and the upper building also would fail to please me, were it not for a dainty, little, decorated Gothic side chapel that lightens the depressing effect of the whole.

Adjoining the church is a very fine cloister, that seems, nevertheless, to fail in effect, probably because it is unable to bear comparison with its delightful rival at Arles. Moreover, it is too large; and the flies and mosquitoes swarm in it.

But the best of Montmajour is yet to come—that which is hidden in the fall of the rock, upon the other side of the hill, towards Cordes—the strange little church of St. Peter, with its ancient, pagan columns and capitals, which, though doubtless later than the seventh century to which the guide ascribes them, bear, nevertheless, an air of remote antiquity. This is the chapel of St. Trophimus; one of the retreats he made use of when he came first to the evangelising of Arles. His little confessional is here, adjoining the chapel; and a chimney rising



MONTMAJOUR. THE ABBEY.

into the rock is the hiding-place to which he used to withdraw when enemies from the neighbouring island—for in those days Cordes and Montmajour were both islands, and the sea swept up to the very gates of Arles—sailed over to search for him, in vain.

Leaving St. Peter's chapel, I look down the fall of the rock and across to this Cordes—which means Cordova, the name given to it by the Saracens when they occupied it before capturing Montmajour. From the meadow below there rises

a plaintive bleating, and the tinkle of a bell. 'Tis a little black goat complaining in his patois. "Ce sont les moustiques qui le font crier," says the guide. The sight of him reminds me that within the hills of Cordes, deep, deep in a mysterious grotto, is hidden the inexhaustible treasure of the Chèvre d'Or.

Do you know the story of the Chèvre d'Or; the great goat with the golden fleece, whom you may meet, in the night, browsing upon the mountain moss? In all the corners of Provence he is to be found; at Les Baux, wandering in the moonlight among the abandoned palaces, or here in Cordes beside his mysterious treasure. Wherever he passes, his hoofs leave glints of gold upon the pebbles, and sometimes, where his feet have been, you may find red marks, like drops of blood. Many and many an unhappy peasant of Provence, hearing his bleat and the tinkle of his bell, and seeing one flash of the golden fleece, seized suddenly by an insatiable desire, has followed the Chèvre d'Or feverishly from rock to rock; and followed in vain; for none have overtaken him yet, so swift he is.



AN ARLÉSIENNE.

And, oh, beware! beware! for to follow him is desire insatiable, and to take him—and well he knows it—is death. For, captive, the Chèvre d'Or will revenge himself; and, found, his treasure will be the source of all misery. 'Tis because of him that men hate one another, and because of him that women have sold their love. There are to-day in Provence the tombs of some who have died a bloody death because they so longed for the Chèvre d'Or.¹

¹ The white bull, the golden goat, the dragon, the goose, the black fowl, the white sow, and I know not how many other fantastic animals, keep guard, as we know, in every land, over the hidden treasures.

At the midnight hour on Christmas Day, as soon as the mass is sung, the infernal guardians lose their power until the last sound of the bell which announces its end. That is the only hour in all the year when the conquest of the treasure becomes

Musing over man's ever unsatisfied desire, over the mystery of his eternal quest of something that shall complete his ego, Paul Arène's words come back to me: "Les hommes inventent, calculent, et c'est la femme qui a la clef d'or; faites vous aimer de Norette."

Some one touched me upon the shoulder, and a gruff voice said, "Monsieur, il y a encore Sainte Croix."

"Yes, Monsieur Arène; we had both forgotten that." But it was not Monsieur Arène. It was only the guide.

La Chapelle de Sainte Croix is a dainty little example of Romanesque symmetry and proportion, perhaps the most perfectly balanced and artistic building of its kind that Provence has to show. It stands boldly upon the ledge, some little distance away from the other buildings. Around it are ranged the men's graves and the children's, big and little, dug out of the solid rock.

"Would they do as much for us?" I spoke more to myself than to the guide.

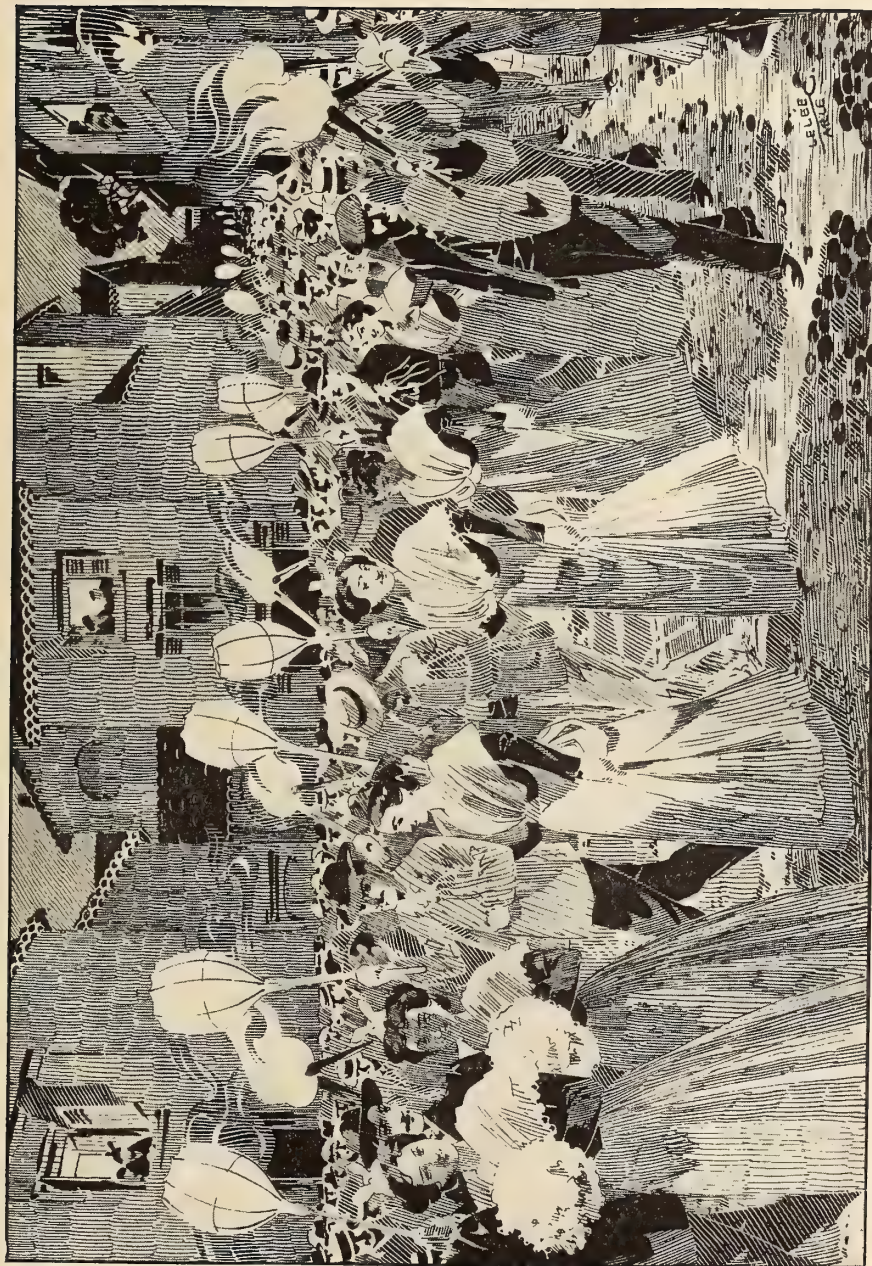
"Ah! Quatre planches de sapin, Monsieur." And he shook his head. We both stood looking down at the graves.

"The bodies can have been scarcely covered," I said. My companion shrugged.

"On met la pierre dessus—et puis voilà."

We went back to the donjon, over the rock that the pretty snakes inhabit, past a flock of sheep that are almost invisible at a little distance, so completely does their colouring blend with the brownish yellow of the stone. The view from that donjon tower is one to remember always, so very Provençal it is. Away over the meadows rises the hill of Cordes, and southward stretches the unbroken expanse of the Camargue.

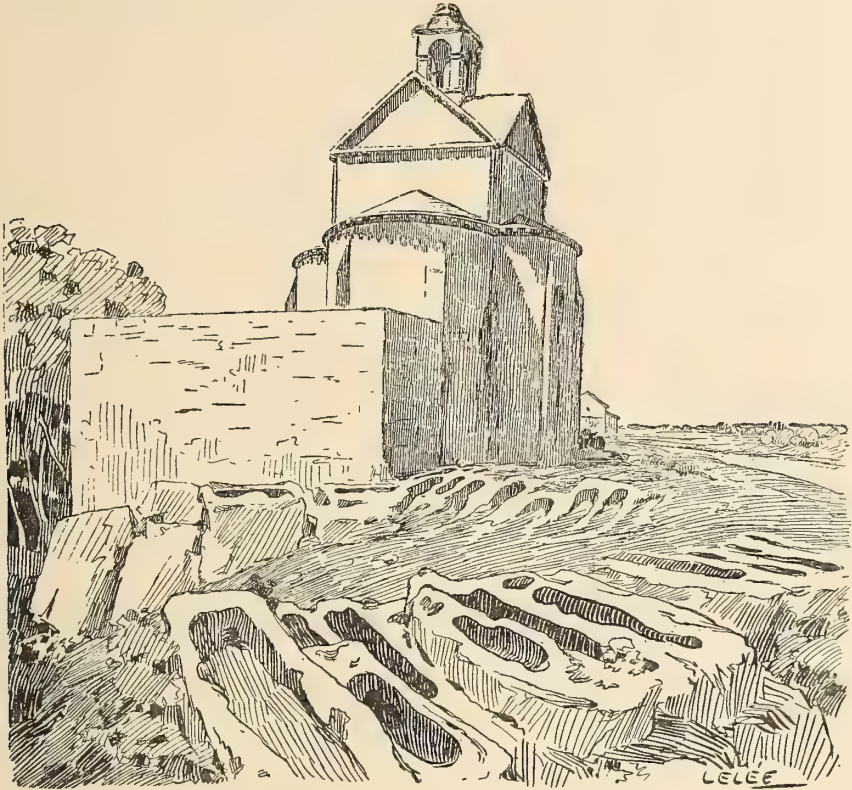
possible. But you must know where it is, and you must find time to dig and to take it. If you are discovered within the gulf at *L'Ile missa est*, it closes upon you for ever; moreover, if at that moment you have succeeded in meeting the fantastic animal, the submission which he has shown you during the hour of the mass changes into fury, and all is over with you.—*Les Visions de Nuit dans les Campagnes*, George Sand. See also *La Chèvre d'Or*, by Paul Arène.



ARLES. LA PERGOULADO (TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION).

To face page 212.

Eastward is the plain extending away towards the Crau, the village of Fontvieille, and Alphonse Daudet's mill, white upon its eminence ; all backed by the chain of the Alpines and the crags of Les Baux. Westward the city of Arles lifts above its hill the towers of the amphitheatre and St. Trophimus ; while,



MONTMAJOUR. THE CHAPEL OF SAINTE CROIX, SHOWING THE TOMBS
CUT IN THE ROCK.

far off, the Rhône winds, like a silver serpent, to Tarascon and the castle of Beaucaire. One is close to the beating heart of Provence.

But again the guide is waiting. I tear myself away, and plunge down into the dark spirals of the staircase, and out, past

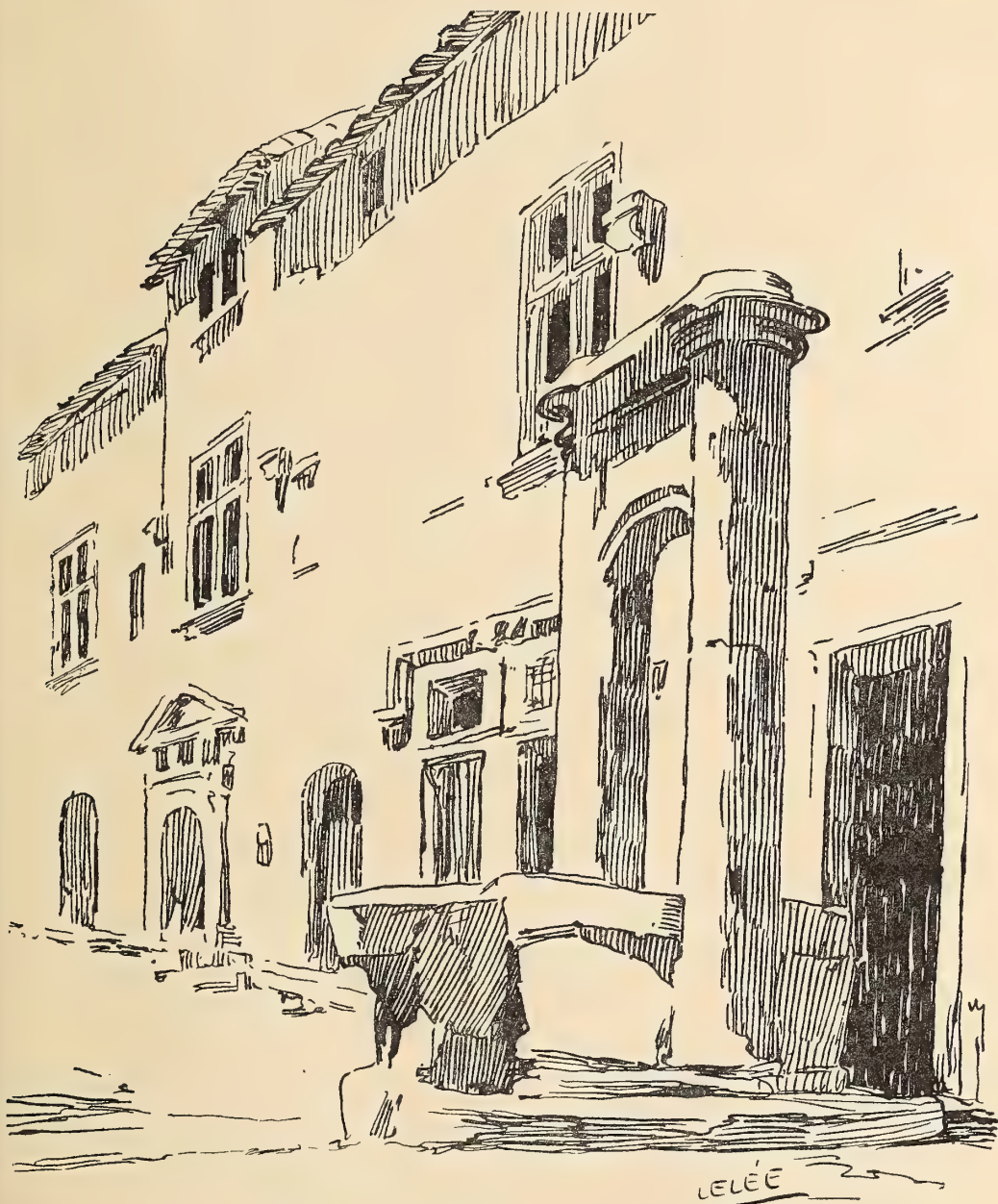
the ground floor of the tower that now serves as a sheepfold, into the glaring heat again. The guide looked up at two cumulous clouds in the blue. "If only it would rain," he said, "there would be franc pieces falling." For four months there has been almost no rain in Provence; but there is hope to-day, for the sea wind is sweeping over the Camargue.

From the road that divides the fir-wood, up the steep path that leads to the door of the Benedictine's church, a flock of sheep comes winding; and in the rear pant three young lambs, painfully toiling, finding their life a hard one, even in these early days. Two of the mothers, hearing the appeals, return to their children, and coax them with soft words towards the fold.

The bleating file of them having pattered by; with something of the world-pain upon me, I make for Arles through the fir-trees. What can the pang mean? Have I, too, heard the bleat of the Chèvre d'Or; or is it just a memory of the Chapel of Sainte Croix, that pricks me with its secret thought? I rather think it must be that; for I seem to see, across the dust clouds, shallow graves dug in the rock, and to hear a voice, gruff, but not wholly unsympathetic, muttering laconically; "On met la pierre dessus—et puis voilà!"

The amphitheatre of Arles, looked at apart from its modern uses, and its connection with the life of to-day, is certainly one of the most solemn and awe-inspiring monuments that the past has given to us. It is so very Roman, so massive, so noble, so strong, and, now, so silent. So silent that, passing those lonely corridors, you hear only the echo of your own footstep, or the faintest murmur of Arles, blown over these seats that answered, of old, with the roar of thirty thousand Roman throats, to the shriek and the groan, to the thud of the death stroke, and the crash of battle in the arena below.

There is a powerful appeal, a wickedly titanic fascination about a people that conceived such a building as this for its pleasure, and such a sport to fill it. That is why, at once



FOURQUES. FORTIFIED COURTYARD (INTERIOR).

exalted by its grandeur and horrified by its memories, I pace these deserted corridors and look about me, almost furtively, as one might about the echoing passages of a haunted mansion; until, at last, familiarising myself to some extent with its strangeness, and becoming attuned to the echo of my own footsteps, I can give myself up to the sense of satisfaction that its vastness brings.

It is in such buildings as this that one begins to realise the open-handed generosity with which, in these matters, the Roman Government treated the people—a generosity that in later times finds its equivalent in the policy that raised the public palaces of the Middle Ages, the great Gothic cathedrals of England and of France.

Passing along the lower corridor, I notice the boldness of the method of flooring the upper one—great slabs of stone supported upon gracefully carved corbels that give a touch of Grecian lightness to the Roman austerity. Time and the destroyers have left just enough of other details to enable an observer to complete the picture of the building—here, on the ground level, the Roman urinal, there a waste-pipe that drained the upper tiers and corridors.

At the southern end of the long diameter of the building, close to the theatre and the heart of the Roman city, is the imperial entrance to the amphitheatre. Some of the original decorations are still to be seen upon the stone; the Roman wolf and the phallus—the mystic symbol of perpetual life—that the women sometimes wore as a jewel.

Here, opposite to one of the many public entrances, before the eyes of the citizen's wife and family, as they enter, is one of the chambers in which the Roman courtesan received her visitors; beneath it is the morgue, where the dead bodies of the gladiators were laid. Imagine it! From the arena, the cries of dying men; within the corridors, the suppressed sounds of passion; and between them, the silent corpses in the morgue. What was the moral and social condition of a nation for which

such sights and sounds made a holy day? What wonder that the Roman empire perished!

I mount the flight of stairs, that widen at the base to allow of quick egress, and emerge among the seats that give upon the arena. One is struck at once by the great height of the podium—necessarily built so for the protection of the spectators when wild beasts were fighting in it. The heavily barred openings, by which the animals left their dens, are still visible. The seats in the centre, at the end of the short diameter, are those once occupied by the emperor and his suite, whence he would give the signal for the trumpet to announce the entrance of the combatants into the arena. Opposite to the imperial seats are those of the vestal virgins. How often, and with what thoughts, must impurity have gazed across towards the pure!

It is from the topmost tiers that one best realises the vastness of the whole building—the largest amphitheatre in the world, with the exception of those at Capua and at Rome.¹ Seen from here, it seems quite natural that a mediæval people, utterly ignorant and careless of the value of the monument for other than utilitarian purposes, should have walled up each arch into a building, and, at length, have transformed the amphitheatre into the extraordinary town, of which a seventeenth-century engraving still exists—within whose dark and unexplored depths lurked all that was vilest in humanity, and foulest in disease; so that, in all probability, the record of the open horrors pepe-



¹ The external diameters are 137 and 107 metres respectively. The building accommodated about 30,000 spectators.

trated in its Roman days, were a tale less gruesome than that of the secret sins done in the darkness of those pestilence-stricken dens.

In the times of plague, it was usually here that the disease was wont first to show itself; and on those occasions a military cordon would be drawn round the amphitheatre to prevent egress or ingress. More than once the Government ordered the whole population of the infected place to be temporarily removed. They were made to pass through the streets of Arles—lined with soldiery—to the other side of the river, where a camping place was allotted to them.



A walk round the interior reveals many evidences of these old habitations; here a Gothic window, there a dove-cot, there traces of a staircase; so that one can picture easily to oneself the day when this silent ruin was a little city of darkness. But we can look upon this phase of the amphitheatre's existence with, at least, this grateful memory of its desecrators—that to them, chiefly, we owe the present state of preservation of the building.

How the sun pours down upon these stones! At this spot the masonry forming the upper corridor is broken away, giving a glimpse of the cool shade within its arched roof. It is here, along this length of sunlit passage, that, on summer Sundays and fête days at Arles, when comedy's tinkling laugh ripples through the place of death, is seen one of the daintiest sights that even this city of delights can offer.

It is the time of the interval between the courses de taureaux. The little black bull of the Camargue, that the boys have been chasing, and chased by, this half-hour past, has left the arena—unwillingly perhaps, because often he enjoys the game as much as his persecutors—and the young amateurs of Arles—one or



ARLÉSIENNES AT A BULL-FIGHT IN THE ARENA.

two of them proud already in the possession of a cockade¹—are resting from their labours joyfully performed before a maiden's eyes. The beast having vanished, beauty passes into the corridor, there, in coolness, to see and to be seen.

As they leave their seats, let us follow them from the glaring sunlight into the shade. Here, through the shadows of this tunnel, grey with its two thousand years, where once the Roman matrons walked, are now circling, in a long stream of blending colour, the vestal virgins of to-day; erect and royal of bearing, proud, and consciously beautiful, as possessors of such a heritage should be; yet with eyes that will glance, lips



that will smile, and a laugh ever ready to bubble up. Now, suddenly, they pass from the chill, gloomy tunnel into this length of glowing, glistening way that takes the full sunlight of Provence. Here the golden rays flood them in glory, and from all the sliding frieze, the answering colours, greys, pinks, fawns, and deep, rich blues, stream out proudly to meet the light. Framed in daintily looped black hair, the Greek, the Roman, and the Oriental faces pass; and before you have time to do more than note one of them

—the lifted skirt, the poised blue parasol, the shawl of perfect line—one by one the frieze of young life, and love, and laughter glides into the darkness again.

That is the comedy of the arènes; but to-day the spirit of comedy has fled, and the sterner muse is here. I am alone with tragedy and the stones. Hush! Here are wild poppies—the symbol of nepenthe—blowing upon this deserted threshold.

¹ A red, white, and blue cockade is bound on to the forehead of each bull before it is let into the arena, and a prize of five francs or more is put upon it. The youths of Arles descend into the ring, and endeavour, at their own risk, to snatch the cockade; a feat which needs agility and courage, although the bulls of Camargue lack the ferocity of their Spanish brethren that are slain in the *courses de mise à mort*.

From the crown of the topmost arches you can see down into the very heart of the Roman Arlatan, the temple of the Bona Dea,¹ the theatre, the palaces of the great officials. I can see, too, the tower of St. Trophimus, and L'Homme de Bronze on the Hôtel de Ville. Towards the river is the mass of houses forming the town, some of them galleried on this side, where they are sheltered from the mistral. Into many of their walls are built stones taken from this very amphitheatre, in the days when it was known as the Carrière, or quarry.

One has but to take a stroll through the city to see how everywhere she has been dressing herself anew in her old clothes. St. Trophimus, the Hôtel du Nord, the old ramparts, have all borrowed of the stones of Rome for their adorning; and herein is part of the charm of Arles.

Leaving the amphitheatre, I take a look back at its elevation. How massive, how almost uncouth and elephantine it is; yet there is not lacking in its Doric and Ionic design a certain suggestion of grace that was, no doubt, more pleasing still when the attic story was standing. I notice a slightly oval curvature in the line of elevation, as though the builders had sought in that way to suggest a repetition of the curves of the plan. Whatever may be the reason, the building is certainly slightly barrel-shaped.



Here is the scene of a second form of Latin entertainment—the theatre; but how different in spirit! The building I have just left was as altogether masculine and Roman as this is feminine and Greek. That was stern and solemn in its ruin; this is tender and pathetic. Those dark and massive arches were to be looked at in the day; but these two fragile, marble columns and the white stone seats seem to shrink, almost, from

¹ The site now occupied by the Eglise de la Major.

a light stronger than that of the night. I will come here again, when the spirit of this place wears the moonlight for a garment, and the stars for a crown.

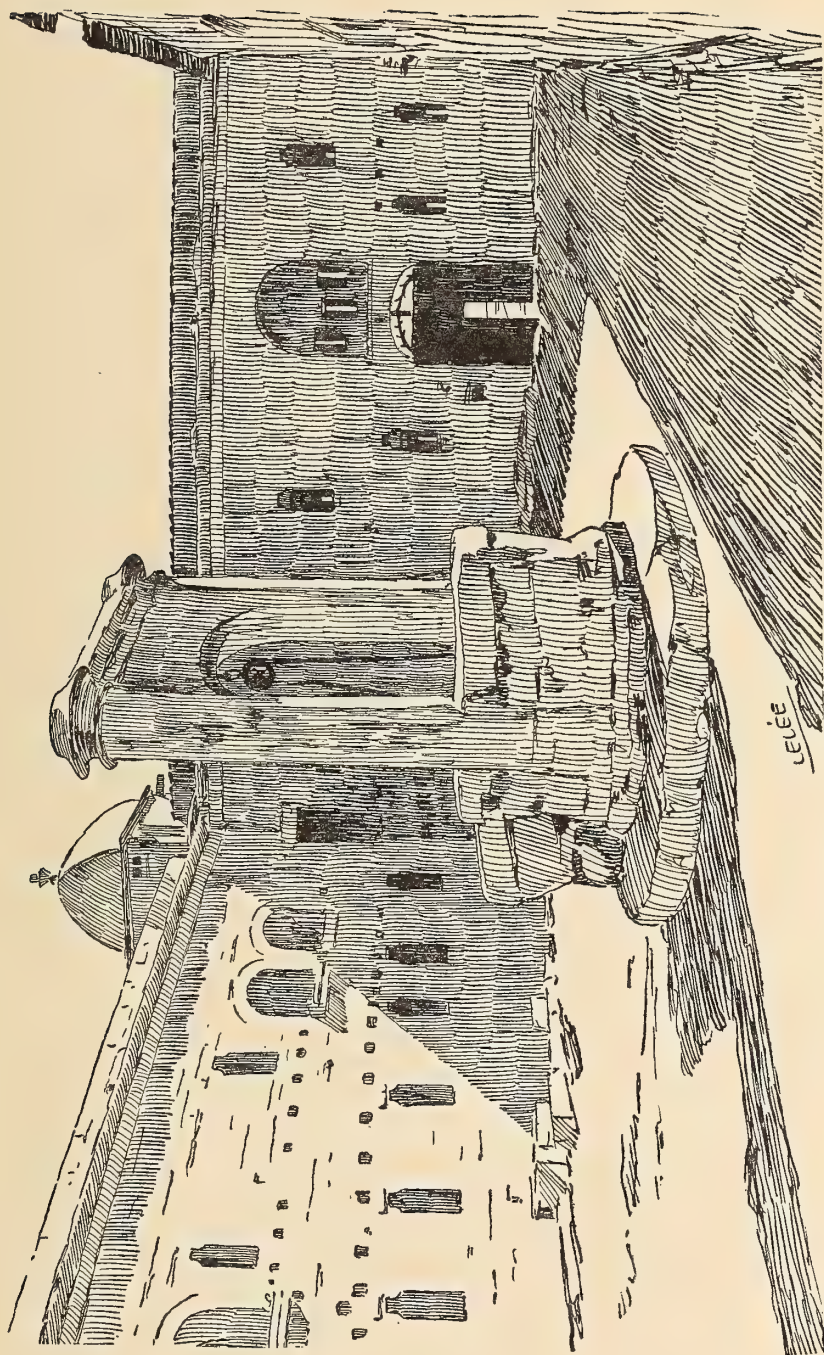
When one thinks of it in connection with its more formal name, the Place du Forum, this Place des Hommes is very illustrative of the continuity of life which is so significant a feature of Arles. The popular name shows that for two thousand years the character of the spot has not changed. It is still the centre of the life of the town, the place where, on market and



fête days, the men discuss politics and bargains, and carry out their business generally. Almost the whole square is then covered with chairs which overflow from the various cafés; and the babel is simply astonishing.

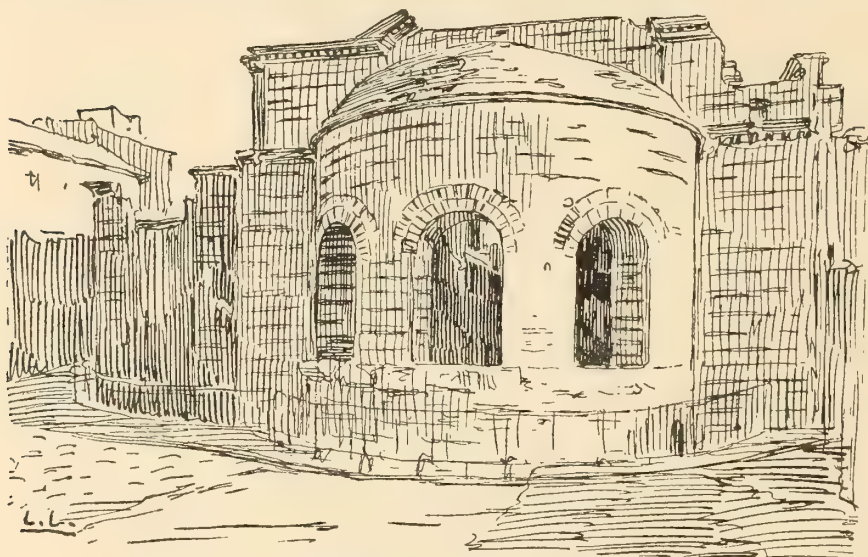
Here, adjoining one another, in adjacent corners, are the two hotels of Arles. One of them, the Hôtel du Nord, has built into its front wall a part of two Corinthian columns, a pediment, and a cornice that came from one of the great Roman buildings; while the other, the Hôtel du Forum, is decorated with Arlesian frescoes by Monsieur Lelée. But the inquirer must decide for himself to which of these two attractions he will succumb.

Leaving the Place des Hommes, I make my way down to the little Musée Réattu, housed within the ancient monastery and palace of the Knights of Malta. The pictures are, for the most part, of small interest; but I find myself attracted by some that illustrate the development of the Arlesian costume. For instance, one would gather from one of them, that the fichu was worn in the nineteenth century almost as it is now; though the head-dress was quite different. In those days a handkerchief was passed over the head, brought down on both sides



FOURQUES. FORTIFIED COURTYARD (INTERIOR).

under the chin, and tied on the top ; a fashion that, for elegance, is not to be compared with the charming modern coiffure, in which the hair is parted in the middle, brought low over the brows, and daintily fastened on the top of the head with a black ribbon that shows a glimpse of white. The corsage, also, was, in those days, fashioned less alluringly than it is now ; and altogether these pictures remind me that we were not the only Europeans



LES THERMES. KNOWN AS THE PALACE OF CONSTANTINE.

who, in the early nineteenth century, lost, for a while, our sense of beauty.

Close to the Musée Réattu, and fronting the Rhône, is the absidal end of a building which, by reason of restoration, and of the red Roman bricks or tiles used in its construction, does not, at first glance, give one an impression of great antiquity, and is, perhaps, at variance with the usual conception of a Roman emperor's pleasure-house. This, nevertheless, is part of the palace of Constantine, he who dreamed once of transporting to his beloved Arles the seat of the Roman Empire. Seeing

only what one sees to-day, it is not easy to gather an idea either of the magnificence or of the vastness of the building in the days when Constantine inhabited it, and gave the people great spectacles in the arena. At that time the palace extended almost to the Forum, now the Place des Hommes; but, even to-day, standing beneath the vaulted absidal roof that is still dark with soot left by the curling smoke, and looking down upon the elaborate arrangements for heating the baths, and upon the fragments of mosaic paving and marble floors, once swept by the robes and the togas, one begins to realise the enervating luxury of a time when seven baths a day was not considered more than enough for the due cleansing and comfort of men and women of quality.

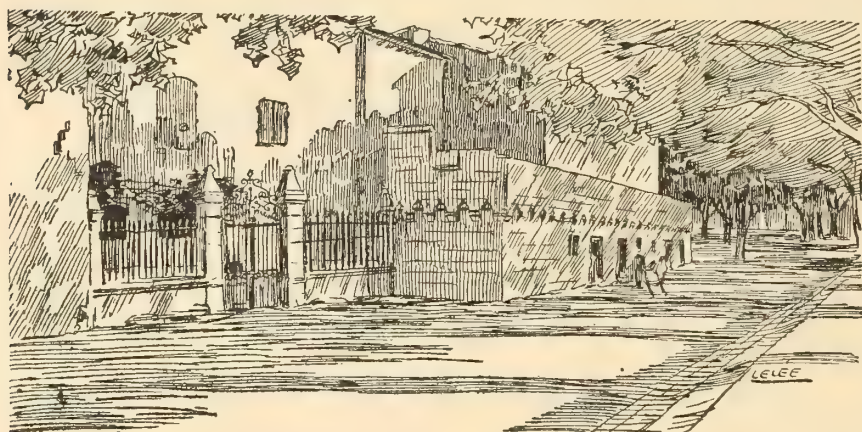
In and out of the openings of the sleeper walls through which hot air was admitted to the baths, the guide's little black terrier is running, nosing for quarry as he goes—an incident very typical of Provence.

The façade of the palace, as seen from the river, though quite unobtrusive, is stately in a simple way; the effect being obtained by symmetry of design, by relief of the stonework with string courses and cornice mouldings in red brick, and by the alternation of red brick and stone in the relieving arches: but this entrance must have been much more impressive when the waters of the Rhône, now almost deserted, were bright with the sails of the Roman galleys, and the waves, now lapping against the narrow steps where the Arlésienne is filling her pail, washed over the great staircase that led up to the gates.

Evidences of desecration are to be seen everywhere in this part of the town. Here is a decorated Gothic church become a stable; and the chapel of the Knights of Malta, a storehouse. I pass along the quay before the fishermen's houses, before a



picturesque length of mediæval wall, and the remains of a Gothic tower. This is La Roquette, the mariners' quarter, as one may judge easily by the names of the streets—the Rue des Pilotes, the Rue des Matelots, etc. Here is the part of Arles that flourished when the city had its port. Its glory is departed now; but in olden days the people of La Roquette held their heads high, and looked down scornfully upon the inhabitants of the Hauteure—the hill on which the amphitheatre is built—who, to show their equality with the mariners, would



CHAMBRE DES MARINS, QUAI DE LA ROQUETTE.

always put on their best array when they went visiting down by the river.

Sometimes, even to-day, if you happen to wander at sunset along this quay, you may see, emerging from a narrow street, the bent form of one of the old capitaines de marine coming out to say "Good-night" to the river, as he has done these fifty years past, and as his ancestors did before him, right back, perhaps, to the days of the Roman sailors who knelt to Phœbus Apollo when first he shook the reins upon his team. But few of these ancients are left now. One by one the capitaines de marine have set out upon their last, long voyage—and

Arles is a port no more. I saw one of these survivors to-day, sitting in a little street with his wife beside him, and a young girl—a grand-daughter, perhaps—talking to them from the



first-floor window above. A great red, round, bronzed, bearded old sailor he was, in blue trousers and jersey, nautical even



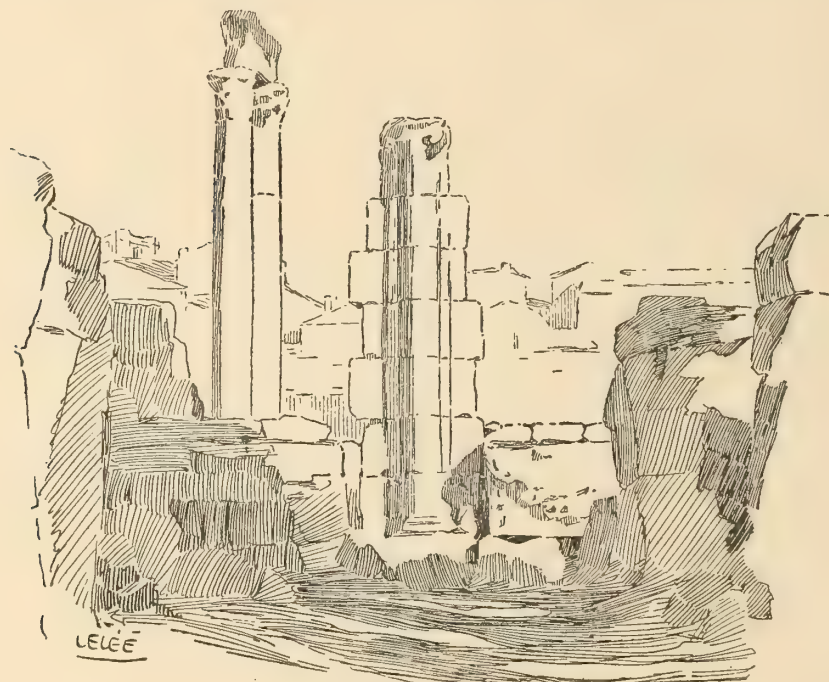
COAT OF ARMS ON THE FAÇADE OF THE ANCIENT
MOULIN DE LA ROQUETTE.

to the blue ribbon on the battered straw hat. They stared much at me; and the dog was by no means friendly.

To judge by the little bits one comes across, many of the

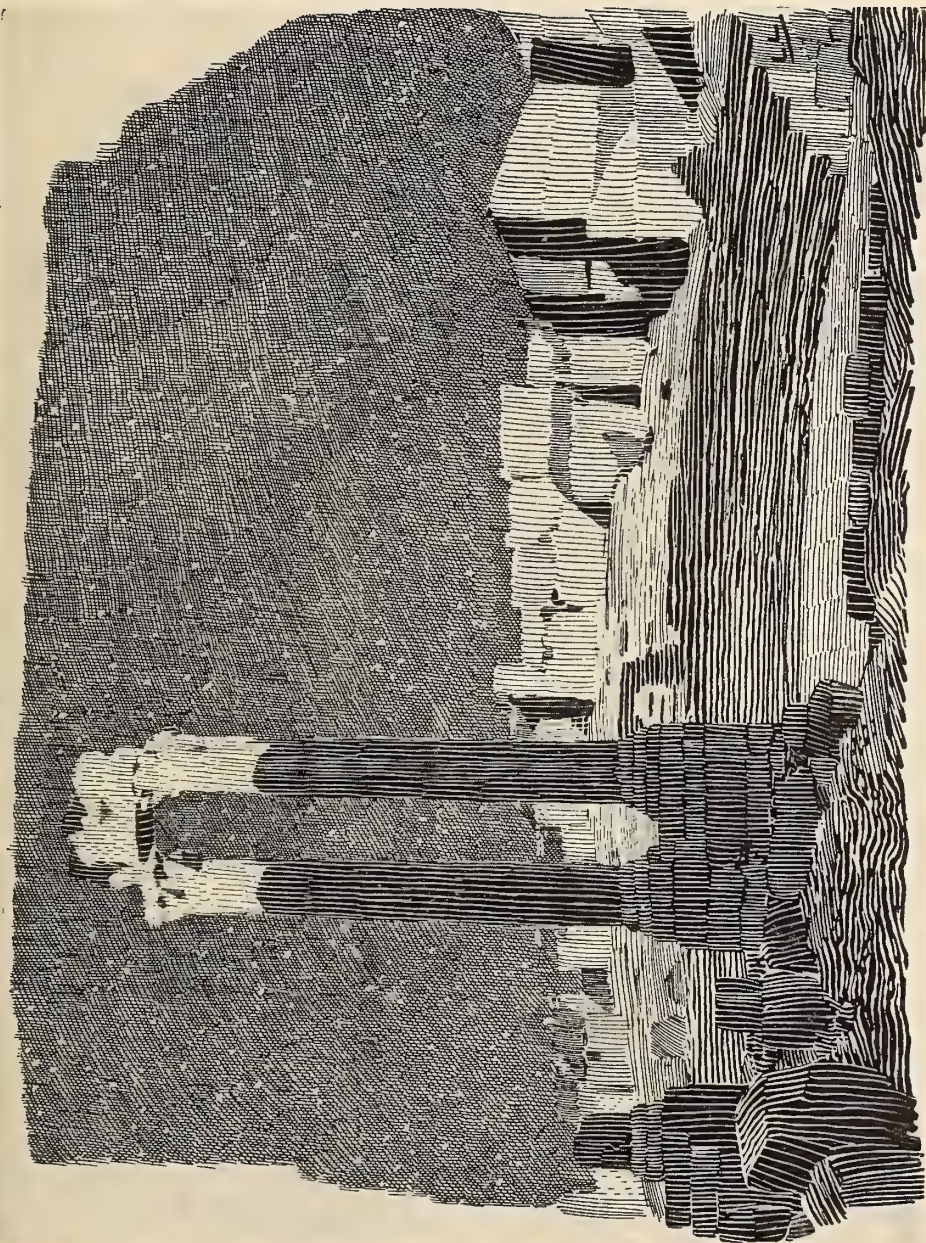
houses in this quarter are of the Renaissance period. At the corners virgins and saints look down from under their canopies.

The moon is high over Arles, bathing in silver light the seats of the theatre where I am sitting, casting black shadows from tier to tier, black shadows between the parted stones.



THE ROMAN THEATRE.

Before me, frail and pathetic, the two last columns stand, their marbled mottlings just revealed in the pale glow. Behind them, the great tower of St. Trophimus—its round-headed windows showing pitchy black—rises from a dark tree; while above them, in the indigo sky, is set one star for a crown. To my left, massed around the Saracen tower whence of old the muezzins called, stand out the fir trees of the public garden.



ARLES. THE ROMAN THEATRE BY MOONLIGHT.

Over it all, faintly revealing the fluting on a broken column, the carving on a Corinthian frieze, kissing their edges with light, the pale moonbeams sleep. The scene is dreamily, mystically beautiful; filled with a sense of the presence of living things, the guardian spirits of the night, who walk in silence. The stillness is unbroken; only a breath of air sighs through the fir trees; a window is shut in the street.

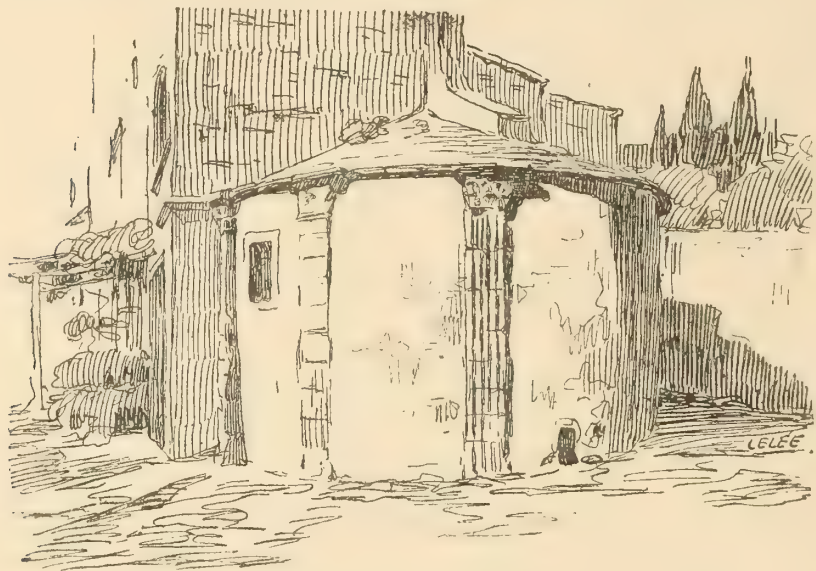
Now appear the phantom forms of the past, peopling this place of mystery. The seats fill, the ghostly actors glide over the stage; I hear their voices rising and ringing to the full pitch of tragedy; a deep emotion thrills the haunted place, Then, while my heart beats and my breath is caught, when I feel that the limit of intensity is reached, that I can bear no more, suddenly, from a moment of silence, float the liquid notes of the chorus, breaking in an instant the tension of overwrought nerves, and falling upon the spirit like the plash of rain upon a long-parched land—

“Where the voice of living waters never ceaseth
In God’s quiet garden by the sea,
And earth, the ancient life-giver increaseth
Joy among the meadows, like a tree.”

As the voices are silenced, and the phantom forms glide away, I leave my seat, and, startled by the sound of my own footsteps, step down the tiers, over the black chasm into which the curtain once fell, and across the rustling grasses that now form the stage. Then I climb their bases, and stand between the columns that shine above my head. The light of the moon wanes, as two fleecy clouds drift over its face; and, for a moment, the spell is broken. A mosquito hums about my eyes; a group of lads in the street catch sight of me, and burst into boisterous laughter that echoes through the night silence. “C’est effrayant; c’est un acteur. Ha! ha! ha!” They vanish, clattering down the lane towards St. Trophime.

Midnight tolled from the churches as I reached the Place des Hommes.

There is a fair to-day in the Lices; and this morning I make for it. The Lices is the promenade of the Arlésiennes, the Place des Femmes, as one might say. To-day, over much of the lower part of it, between the four rows of plane trees,



APSE OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH OF ST. JEAN DU MOUSTIER.

are erected booths of every description, shooting galleries, stalls for games and lotteries, boutiques where every conceivable thing is exposed for sale; while, interspersed among all these, are gipsy caravans and rows of jardinières and farm carts. Through it all there ranges a motley crowd; blue-bloused peasants, and Arlesian maids in cool pink frocks; rough farmers from the lands near by, and rougher shepherds from the Camargue. Here is a man pushing through the crowd a hand-cart full of new loaves for a restaurant, and here is a



Au Marché
en Arle
LELÉE
ARLE

MARKET DAY.

crowd of women buzzing round a booth that is bright with the colour of cloths, brilliant paper lamp shades, and all manner of women's gear.

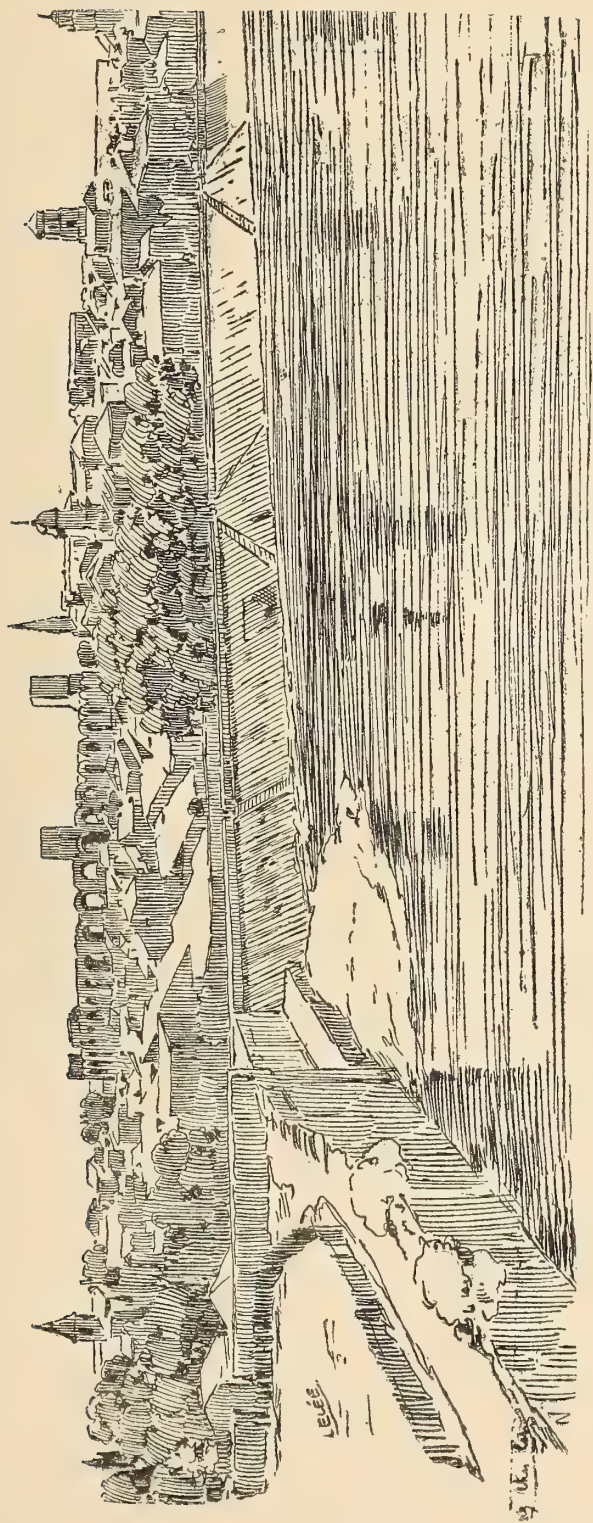
At the bend of the Lices I am assailed by a confused noise of baaing, bleating, and bellowing. The booths have given way to pens, the women's world to that of the men. Here is the little kingdom of short, stout farmers in black blouses and brown corduroys, with tanned faces under wide-brimmed slouch hats. Within the pens are sheep and rams, many of them lying down, utterly exhausted by a long tramp over dusty roads. Without, tethered to the plane trees or carts, are lying and standing little groups of goats, with dogs watching



BARBEGAL, NEAR ARLES. RUINS OF THE ROMAN AQUEDUCT.

over them; a brown mule, suckling its foal, munches hay the while; and, close beside them, two tiny white goats, both snuggling up against their mother, are being heaped in hay by a small, though busy, child in a red frock. The air is heavy with dust and the reek of animals; everywhere the bronzed shepherds of the Camargue, leaning upon their long staves, breast high, are chattering and bargaining.

A loud tinkling attracts me; and a ram with great, long, curly horns, a bell on its neck, and three balls of uncut wool upon its back—denoting it a dompteur or leader of the flock—follows its shepherd down the street. A picturesque attelage provençal passes me; the cart groaning under the weight of a death's-head peasant, with his numerous family, and many



ARLES. GENERAL VIEW.

goats whose heads peer over the tail board. Here a dozen sheep, wildly struggling, are being lugged and chivvied remorselessly out of their pen, over the stone balustrade; close to my side a beautiful young donkey, desperately frightened, is trying to kick its way to freedom from the back of a cart. But no one heeds it; and soon it gets one leg outside, and, being unable to withdraw it, is rendered helpless, and collapses in a heap. The cart rattles off. Two magnificent donkeys follow it; and a third, tied to a tree, laments their departure "en son patois." Here is a breath of sweet air at last, and the sunlight flashing upon the Rhône.



THE ALISCAMPS AND THE CHURCH OF ST. HONORAT.

CHAPTER XIX

MORE OF ARLES AND OF HER WOMEN

WHEN one considers the intense historical interest that belongs to such a spot as the Aliscamps at Arles, a visit to it by day can hardly be other than disappointing. The approaches to the cemetery are filled with loungers and men playing bowls, and on reaching the chapels, and the rows of sarcophagi set end to end between the avenues of great poplars, half the solemnity of the effect is lost, at the sight of nursemaids sitting upon the tombs, while their charges play at hide-and-seek among the houses of the dead. From the railway adjoining comes the shriek of a train, and near the church of St. Honorat, at the head of the allée, a modern factory emits a ceaseless din. No ; a spot with such memories as this, calls, as the Roman theatre does, for a nocturnal visit, when darkness has shrouded and silenced the desecrations of the day.

Many are the memories of these elysian fields. There is an altar here, erected to the mother of Christ while she was yet living—"Christi Paroe adhuc vivente"—and tradition says that Christ Himself blessed the place, and left the imprint of His knees upon a stone. Dante, too, came to dream in these fields, and sang of them.

Pious men of the mediæval age would come, at great sacrifice, to end their days at Arles ; so that here, in this holy soil, they might be preserved from the wiles of the demons who haunt the tombs of the dead. The bodies were placed in barrels covered with resin, and so delivered to the care of the Rhône ;

and however strong the wind and the current, these floating biers were stayed always before the old city of Arles, and were kept turning, turning upon themselves, until reverent hands drew them from the river. Sometimes, even to-day, the tombs have occupants. Alphonse Daudet—eager always for experiences—and other moderns have experimented upon them; and many a wretch in Arles—benighted else—could tell you that these stones, softened with straw, or a good pile of dry leaves from beneath the poplars, are not the worst beds they have slept in.

It is late at night that I go again to the Aliscamps. Deserted are the streets of Arles, deserted the entrance to the cemetery where by day the men are playing bowls. The silence is unbroken; and, as I enter upon the rows of coffins over which the great poplars rise upon either side, like columns above the tombs in a cathedral aisle, I experience the uncanny sensation of horror felt by a watcher alone, at midnight, in an ancient church. The trees tower upwards, ghostly and pitchy black; while the pale, white moonlight, slipping here and there between the boughs, dapples with a ghastly light the coffins and the coffin lids. The night spirits of the theatre were sweet and gracious; but here—for all its hallowed memories—are phantoms of fear. Sssst! what is that whispering I hear? Only my own footfall. I pass on. No! there it is again, and I am not moving. I peer into the darkness, but see nothing. Are the dead really awake, then?

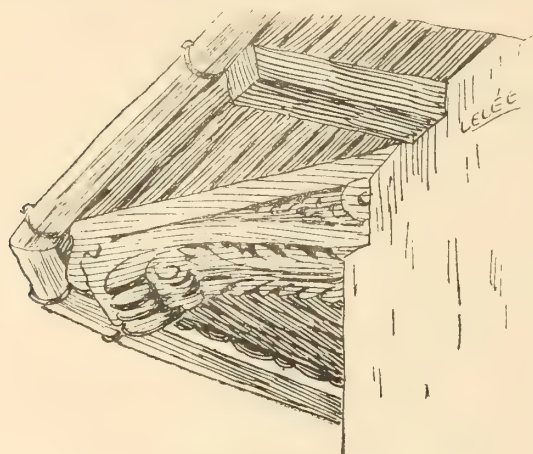
“C’est la fête du cimetière,
Les morts se mettent à danser.
La lune est claire : au cimetière
Les vierges cherchent leurs fiancés.
As-tu peur des pieux mystères?
Passe plus loin du cimetière.”

Not I! I will see this thing through. The whispers grow more distinct—then suddenly cease. Now I can discern dimly, through the darkness, two black figures of men seated



HOUSE BETWEEN THE RAILWAY CUTTINGS, SHOWING THE GALLO-ROMAN TOMBS.

upon a tomb, their faces faintly revealed in a pale, uncanny light. They are both looking at me intently; but they do not speak, and I pass on up the avenue—my breathing quickened.

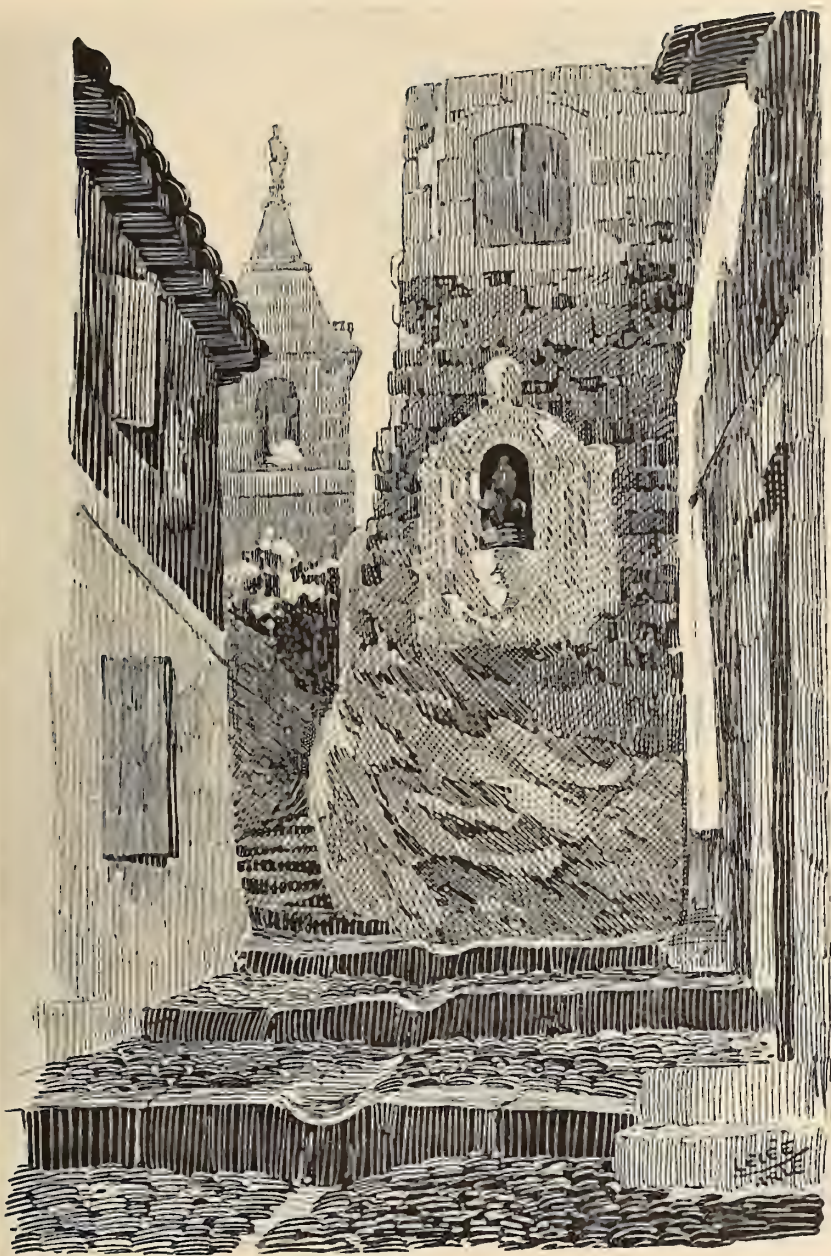


EAVES TIMBERS.

Was that a shining hand beckoning to me from that tomb; the hand of a sleeper whom the horror of some grisly dream has set to tossing and writhing in his dead man's bed? Are those two sunken eyes that stare up from under the broken coffin lid? Away, you phantoms!

It is less ghostly here; for, through a gap in the trees, the full moonlight streams over the tombs. I sit upon one of them, and watch the others gleaming fantastically on the farther side of the avenue. The thought of Maurice Barrès comes to my mind: "My bygone years seem to me like these empty sarcophagi that line this melancholy avenue." How utterly still the world is.

I sit motionless as the coffins—long I sit there, awed by the mystery of things, and wondering whether life or death were better—when, suddenly, choiring across the mournful silence there comes a long note of liquid music, a rich melodious warble that scatters the phantoms of the night, and awakes within my soul an answering echo. One lonely nightingale, heedless of the living and the dead, is pouring out from the tallest poplar his midnight music to the moon, and filling all the haunted avenue with melody. I listen and listen; and not until a prolonged silence has followed the last note, do I turn homeward between the tombs.



ARLES. A SHRINE.

To face page 234.

Leaving my hotel this afternoon I find the Place des Hommes crowded with the hundreds whom the fair has brought here. On the steps I meet Madame, who tells me that she hears how the management of the Arènes are arranging for a fight there between a bull and a tiger. "The directors," she says, "think that the people are growing weary of bull-fights, and want a change—mais c'est une honte pour la France; et nous avons donc l'ame bien dur."

It is not the first time that I have heard of such exhibitions in Arles. Two or three years ago—I believe—there was a battle between a lion and a bull, the result of which was not quite what the management had hoped; for it was the lion who was frightened, and—there being no corner to hide in—put his tail between his royal legs, and was ignominiously chased round the arena by the bull.

The scene before the café in the Place is a very animated one; and I am particularly interested in the group of men at the table next to mine, who are settling up some transactions made this morning in the Lices. How lovingly he with the set of new sheep bells at his feet is counting over the bank notes, before handing them to his friend to check. But I have no time to linger here, if I am to see St. Trophimus and the Musée lapidaire this afternoon.

On the way there is the Palais de Justice, showing beautiful Renaissance windows and the lion of Arles upon its façade. Before it are the well-worn, stone seats, where the public waited in the days when justice was done in the open air. The tower of the palais is a not very successful imitation of the monument at St. Rémy. Passing through the vaulted hall of the building—the vaulting so cunningly done that it still serves as a model to architects—here is the Place de la République, in the centre of which stands the obelisk that was once in the Roman circus beside the Rhône. Some of the stones from its base, with the sculptured horsemen and chariots, are in the Musée lapidaire;

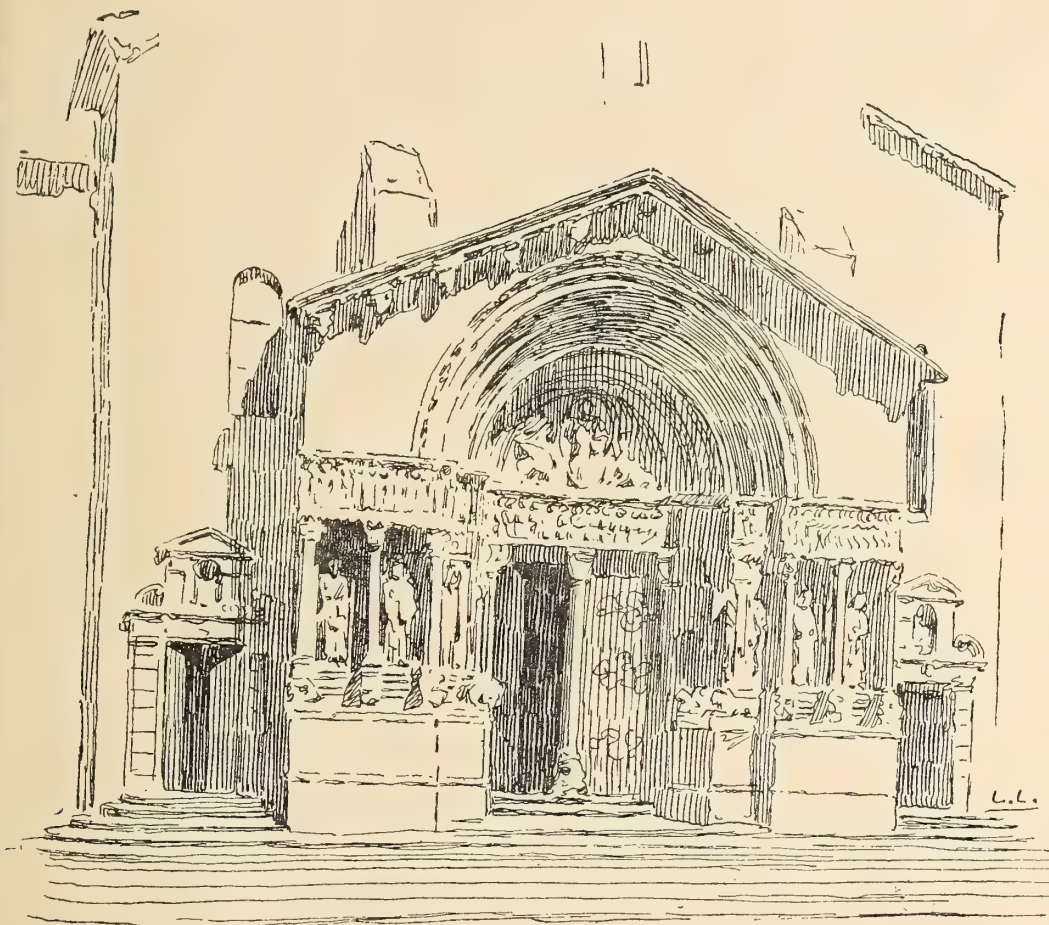
and others—a typical instance of French insouciance in these matters—are in the Roman theatre.

On the east side of the Place is the façade of the cathedral,



BEFORE THE CHURCH OF ST. TROPHIMUS.

from which stands out one of the most beautiful porches that Southern art has given us. Looking up at the Father seated among His evangelists, at the soaring choirs of the heavenly host, the friezes of the blessed and the damned, and the



FAÇADE OF ST. TROPHIMUS.

solemn saints gazing down upon the legendary beasts beneath the columns, one cannot but feel how architecturally effective is this mingling of early and dogmatic Western Christianity with the subtler mysticism of the East. The Christian figures of the façade are, in fact, raised above the lower more mystical semi-Byzantine work from whose spirit they seem to have borrowed so much; and it is interesting to note that the very stones of the plinth, of a soft golden tint, are older than those above them, and were doubtless taken from one of the Roman buildings of Arles.



Here and there an individual figure, such as that representing the weighing of the souls, reveals something of the Gothic manner; while one, at least, of the recumbent figures below the pilasters, though grossier, and the work of a man who did not know his trade, has yet in its curves something that subtly foretells the evolution of the Renaissance line. In the central porch, below the beasts on the

southern side, is a fascinating little figure scratched upon the smooth stone by a novice who had taken for his model one of the large figures above. It is interesting, too, to notice that the seventeenth-century doorway at the side of the porch does not clash with the façade as a whole, the Romanesque and Renaissance arts having sprung from the same classic tradition. Thus St. Trophimus seems to maintain the continuity which is a characteristic of the development of Arles.

Not so very long ago the façade was desecrated by an inscription, "Temple de la Raison," just as that of St. Gilles is to

this day by "Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité." Happily the former fatuity has now disappeared, to be followed very soon, let us hope, by the legend on the sister abbey.

But let us enter between, and beneath, the solemn saints, who, sometimes, in the chilly night, descend from their niches to help some unfortunate who has taken shelter in the porch. The first thing that strikes one about the interior is its simplicity and absence of detail. The porch is older work than the nave, and the church—like all Romanesque buildings—is too dark to encourage any architect to spend time upon carvings that would be comparatively invisible; but, nevertheless, it does seem strange that the workers inside should be so silent while those outside had so much to say. But that was essentially the Romanesque manner. Within, the passionate prayers that were to be prayed in darkness—without, a fierce light pouring down upon the emblems of an authoritative and despotic dogma.¹

The chancel and apse are built in Gothic of the middle fourteenth century, but the work is not very effective.

While I have been wandering about it, the church has been filling; for this is the fête of Ascension Day. Before the service begins I have time to visit the cloisters, which are the best to be seen in Provence, both on account of the rarity of the Provençal styles that they illustrate, and for the sake of the sculptured detail. The north walk is of about the same date as



IN ST. TROPHIMUS.

¹ Cook.

the portal—the middle of the twelfth century—and is in the early decorative style; the east walk is slightly later, the arches being moulded, and much greater skill and refinement shown in the carvings of the capitals. It is interesting, too, to notice here the gradual progress from comparatively simple Corinthian work in the north walk, to the developed biblical subject-carvings in the eastern wing, that retains, nevertheless, all the naive charm of very primitive art. The southern and western walks—of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively—are both very fascinating; but the lightness of the effect is somewhat



THE PROCESSION OF COMMUNICANTS.

injured by the use of heavy buttresses; and the purity of the Romanesque work is lacking. In several cases the Romanesque capitals from the old cloister were made use of when the two wings were rebuilt in the Gothic style; and many of the stones are taken from the adjoining Roman theatre. The cloister is another illustration of the continuity of Arles, and of the pretty way she has of readorning herself with choice remnants of her fallen glories.

The old church is now thronged with worshippers, and bright with colour and candles that flicker upon the flowers massed round the altar. Just as I enter, there rise the liquid

notes of a processional hymn; and, down the narrow aisle, I see the liveried functionary, in cocked hat, approaching, followed by the scarlet acolytes bearing the cross, and behind them a long line of little maids, all in white, carrying bouquets of flowers, and wearing wreaths of white blossom upon their dark hair.



THE LAST RITES.

Then come the elder maidens, with more red and white acolytes following; and then the boys, in short black coats and white shirt fronts. Last of all come the priests, gorgeously arrayed. And so these first communicants—as I take them to be—wind, through light and shadow, beneath the solemn arches,

and gathering round the great altar, heap upon it their offerings of flowers.

When the service is over, and the worshippers have risen for the last time from their knees, I go out into the sunlight, and watch the flood of humanity—coloured women and white maids—streaming down the steps, beneath the God in Judgment and the saints of Heaven that the sun has thrown into full relief. Many of the Arlésiennes make for the Lices; the promenade to which the beauties of Arles go, to see and to be seen, beneath the plane trees.



AT PRAYER.

Following the last of them from the church, I find the walk already bright with dresses of all soft shades; delicate blues, pale sea-greens, pearly greys, and, here and there, a black or deep, dark blue that is perhaps the most effective of all. Every type of Arlesian face is here—the faultless Greek, the sterner Roman, the subtler oriental. Here are skirts lifted daintily, and parasols well poised; here are eyes that wander, and heads

that turn; and here, half revealed, half concealed by the line of the corsage, one golden locket flashing in the sunlight upon gauzy mysteries of white lace. The fairest of them all is the tall one there upon the seat. She is of the oriental type, and, in her fawn-coloured dress, sits motionless, haughty as a queen enthroned, holding, in a slender hand, a parasol over the most beautiful, though certainly the saddest, of all the fair faces in the Lices.

An element of sadness, of wistfulness and discontent, is noticeable in the faces of many of the most beautiful Provençal



LEAVING ST. TROPHIMUS.

To face page 242.

women. Whether, in the majority of cases in which I have observed it, this may be due to mere individual mischance, or whether there are subtler causes at work to account for it—as, perhaps, a more or less conscious knowledge that they are the representatives of a gradually vanishing type—I cannot say; but the fact is, in any case, remarkable in a nation which was “born laughing,” and has acquired a reputation—though an unjust one—for producing coquettes of the most dangerous type. This belief, widely spread amongst all who possess only a superficial knowledge of Provence, is, no doubt, due chiefly to the enormous circulation of Daudet’s grim story in



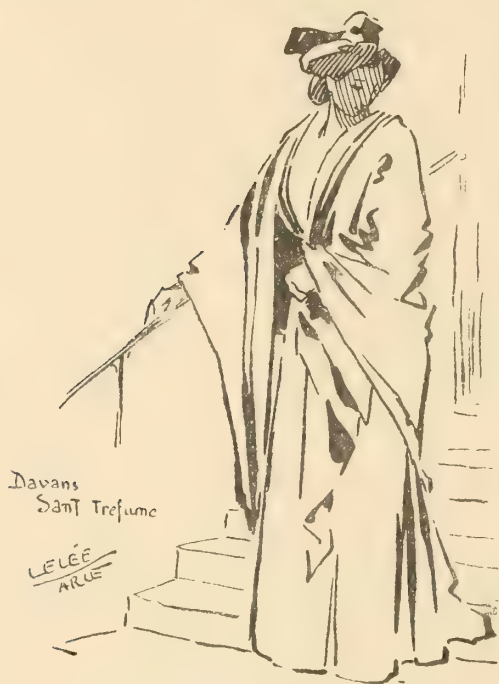
CHURCH PARADE IN THE LICES.

his *Lettres de mon Moulin*,¹ and of the play which he subsequently wrote from it. That is Daudet’s injury to Provence; that he has given to so many an entirely false impression of her women.

It would, of course, be idle to assert that coquetry is absent from their characters; but such a statement would be less false than the opposite assertion commonly made concerning them; for the truth is that, while the Arlésiennes have their failings in regard to their relations with men, the key to their characters is to be found, not in coquetry, but in pride, in self-respect, and, especially, in an intense love of beauty. From these characteristics, inherited perhaps, as their beauty is, from

¹ “L’Arlésienne.” The play bears the same title.

their Roman forefathers, arise a certain dominance and masterfulness of disposition, which makes them difficult to handle in matters of business, and tends to produce in them a certain aloofness or reserve that, while treating strangers with perfect ease and courtesy, is jealously mistrustful of their advances. The favours of an Arlésienne are neither to be bought nor sold.



ON THE STEPS OF ST. TROPHIMUS.

The artist's gold alone will not procure her for his model, nor will a lover's presents purchase her intimacy. He who would be well with her must use surer, subtler means; and, using them, let him beware; for Arlesian hate, like Arlesian love, is passionate, swift, and Southern.

The love of beauty, then — beauty, classic, restrained, permanent, and sane—is inherent in them. That is why the wisest of them guard so jealously the purity of their stock, and that is why, among all the

changing fashions of the day, they still wear a traditional costume that worthily frames the picture. That is why the words *Moun Béu* (*mon beau*) are so often upon their lips, and, perhaps, that is why some of their faces bear the wistful look that I saw, half an hour since, in the eyes of the woman in the *Lices*—for beauty and melancholy have ever dwelt together.



A PAGE OF STUDIES.

Those who may wish to obtain, in one coup d'œil, an idea of the true inwardness of Arles, can best do so in the Musée lapidaire ; for here, opposite to the portal of St. Trophimus, in what was once a Gothic church, are gathered many priceless souvenirs of the Græco-Roman and early Christian life of the town ; and one or two that suggest earlier, perhaps Phœnician, art.

One's eye is at once caught by so many things of beauty—by busts, altars, tombs, sarcophagi—that it is difficult to know where to begin. Here is a fine specimen of Roman work—a head of the Emperor Augustus, typical of its kind ; stern,



A WINDY DAY.

relentless, rather cruel ; with a square head, low, wide brow, and sensual lips ; yet, in spite of its faults, majestic and royal, revealing the latent kindness that in life the monarch possessed. Not far from royal Rome is industrial Rome, represented by lengths of heavy lead piping—still bearing the Roman plumber's name—which were used to carry water across the Rhône to Trinquetaille. Here, too, is a pleasant and pathetic little head of the ill-fated boy, Marcellus, of whom Virgil wrote the gracious lines—

“Heu miserande puer ! si qua fata aspera rumpas
Tu Marcellus eris. Manibus date lilia plenis :
Purpureos spargam flores. . . .” ;

and, turning to Greek work, here is a woman's head, mutilated, but so exquisitely lovely, that though she has been given a royal name, she may well have been another Venus of Arles.

To all those who care for Provence, it must be a source of unceasing regret that the magnificent specimen of Greek art that was discovered here in 1651 should ever have been allowed to be hidden away in the Louvre. That statue, which, in the opinion of many, is second in beauty only to the Aphrodite of Milos, has a charm which makes her, to me, more fascinating than her greater rival.

The Milean divinity is indeed divine, but her perfection makes her humanity almost inhuman; whereas the Venus of Arles has about her a frailty and tenderness that keep her both woman and goddess too—as Watts has painted Eve—with her head in heaven, and her feet yet, for a while, upon earth.

Here are symbols of more mystical belief: Mythas the Phœnician serpent god, and the altar to the Bona Dea, where—

because one may not look upon her face—the worshipper sees only two ears listening within the wreath. Here, bringing us back to the pleasures of life, is an exquisite fragment of a Greek dancer, beneath whose floating draperies the feet are flickering through a measure. There are many such fragments here; all of them showing the same swaying, swirling lines. It was, perhaps, one of these very dancing girls who wore in her hair the golden ornament that is there in the case before me, lying beside a human vertebrium that has a stone driven into it. The woman adorns herself, the man falls wounded to death!



GREEK HEAD IN THE MUSÉE LIPIDAIRE

Ita vita! "Poor little woman who awoke so ardently the desires of men—you are, to-day, all broken and mutilated."¹

Upon the shelf there,—looking almost like women, so graceful are they—are ranged rows of beautifully tinted amphore that the Roman maids and matrons once bore upon their shoulders.

Among the most interesting of all the treasures of this building are the Roman and early Christian sarcophagi. Some of the pagan examples show animated hunting scenes carved upon them; and here is one representing the olive-gatherers at work. The baskets into which the fruit is put, and the mill, are almost identical in form with those at present in use, recording an uninterrupted industry of two thousand years. It is interesting to note that the sculptures on the Roman tombs show, on the whole, a far more cheerful conception of death than do those of the early Christians, whose figures have usually a certain wistful sadness quite absent from the Roman work; and this in spite of the obvious fact that Christians copied from the Romans, often so faithfully that in one sculpture, representing the changing of the water into wine, Christ is shown beardless; just a Roman Apollo with another name.

It seems strange that those who had so little hope for this life, and the greatest of all hopes for the next, should carve in so sad a spirit upon the tombs of their dead; while the Romans, who entered fully into the pleasures of this world, and had a far less than Christian hope for the hereafter, could yet look so cheerfully upon the transition. But this apparent anomaly is really more natural than it might appear at first sight; for it is not in the region of material things only that, to our very finite apprehensions, possession is more potent than hope.

This curious overlapping of Christian and Pagan art reminds one how—according to Paul Arène—certain villagers of Eastern Provence became enamoured of the God Pan, until, in their narrow brains, he was transformed, little by little, into "Saint Pansi, the good Saint Pansi, who grants fertility to women, and

¹ Maurice Barrès.



ALTAR TO THE BONA DEA (MUSÉE LAPIDAIRE).

heals children of the colic." I believe that, even to this day, there exists in a remote corner of Brittany, a temple to a Christian saint, who, on inquiry, turns out to be none other than the pagan Venus.

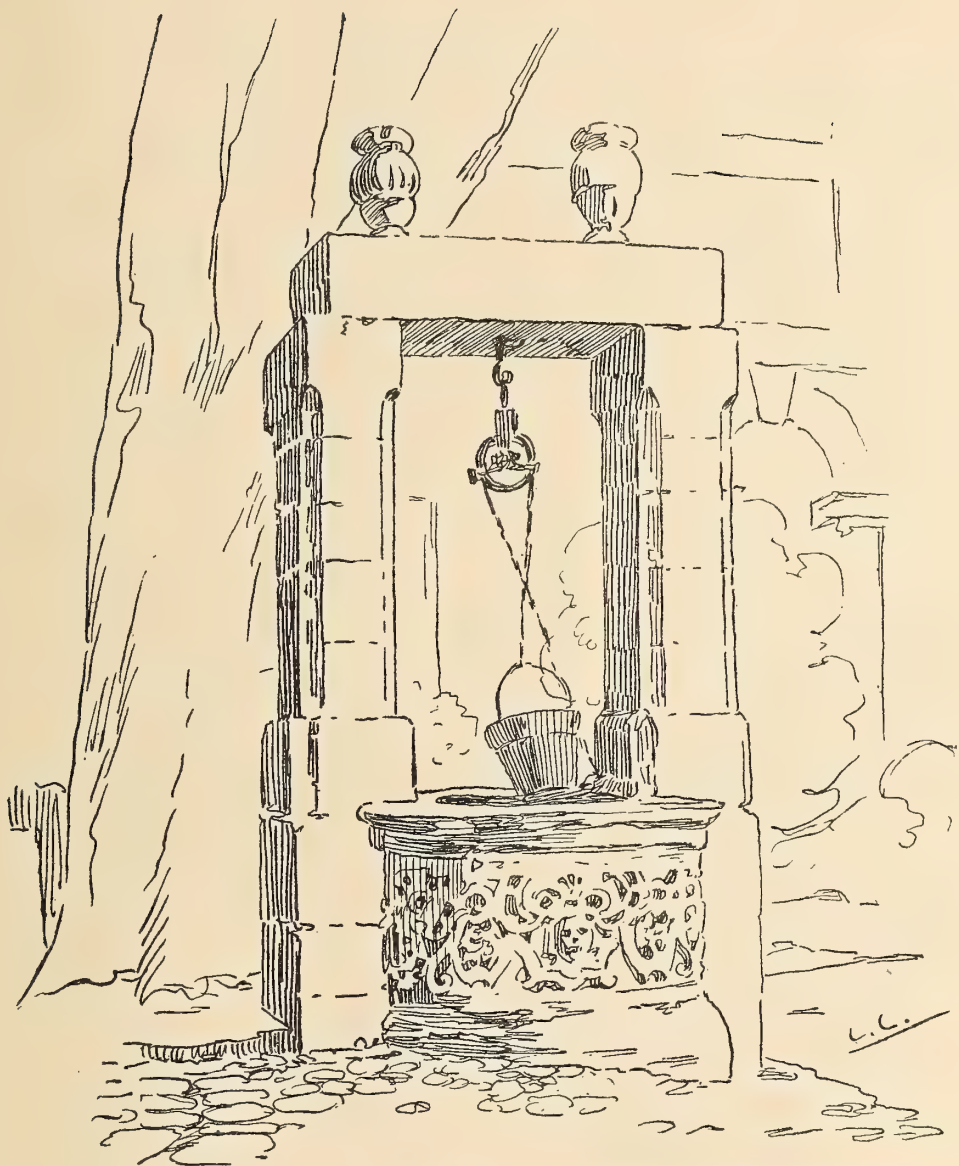
There are many more Roman tombs in the museum, some of them very fascinating. Here is Leda and the Swan—love victorious over death; here is a musician's tomb with his lyre sculptured upon it; and here is that of a cavalier who must have died young and tragically, since they have figured the story of Hippolytus upon his stone. A moment later I notice



a sarcophagus that has been used as a drinking-trough; for there are the inlet and outlet holes, and the high-water mark quite clearly shown. Here is one built by a lady while she was yet living; "*Cornelia sibi viva posuit.*" The tombs are of many degrees of artistic merit. The commoner ones, ready made, with the panels coarsely carved, must, at one time, have been very numerous in Arles; as seems to be proved by a broken specimen which has evidently been so long in use as a flag-stone that the figures on one side are worn away—while the other side is

in quite good preservation. Probably many of them are, at the present time, built into the walls and houses of Arles; for, only two or three months ago, two children, passing the ramparts, saw what looked like a human head among the stones, when closer inspection revealed the sculptured tomb before which I am standing at this moment. These treasures are not easily discovered, for the reason that the stones were, naturally, built up with the carved side inwards.

There are, in this museum, many other little fragments that



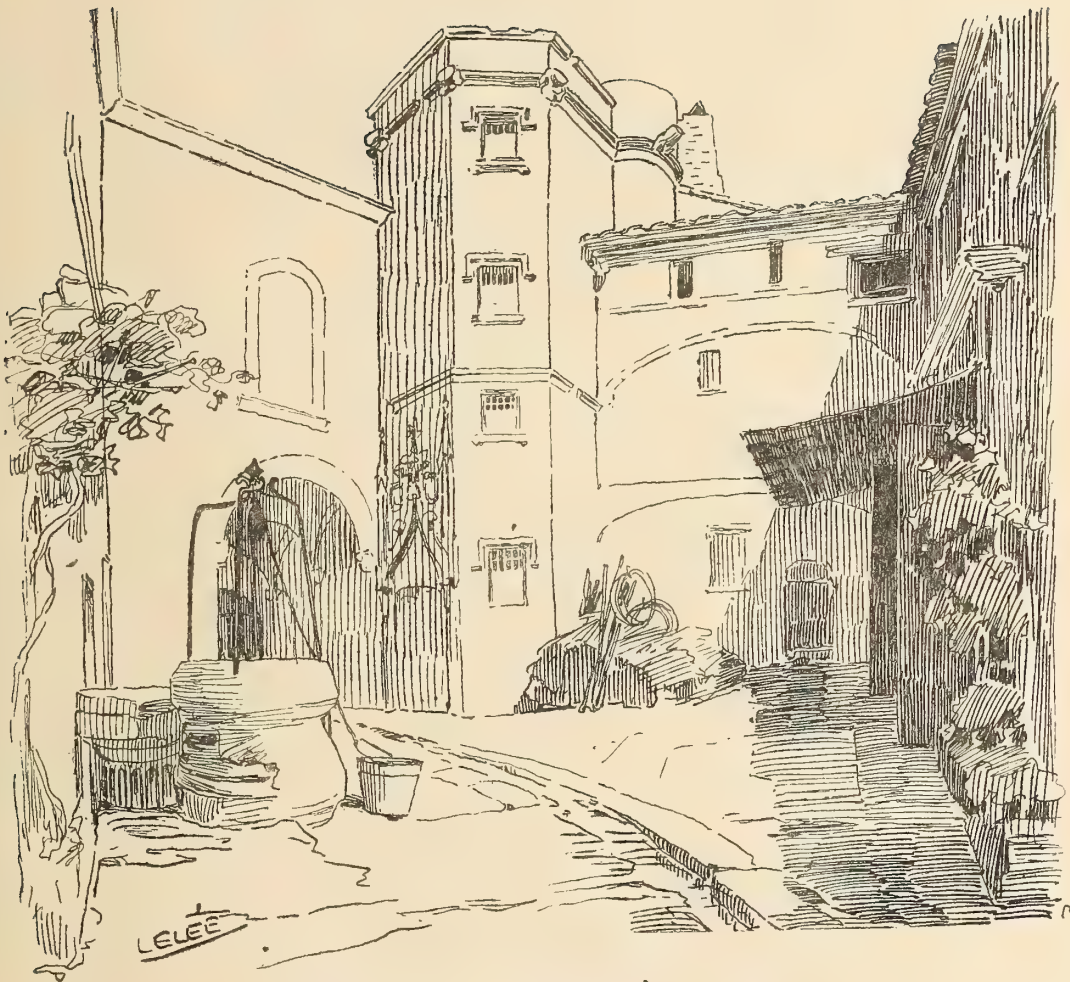
A RENAISSANCE WELL IN THE COURTYARD OF A HOUSE IN THE RUE DES ARÈNES.

recall vividly the past life of the city—pieces of richly sculptured cornices, friezes, and other relics of Rome; and here is a broken column that the old mariners of Arles must evidently have found a use for; since nothing but the constant rubbing of a rope that had the strain of a floating vessel on it, could have worn so deep a groove as that.

To-day I have been wandering about the city, taking a glance, here and there, at odd, out-of-the-way spots that chance and inquiry have sent me to. For such exist at every turn in the narrow, cobbled ways of Arles. If, for example, you approach the cloisters of St. Trophimus from the south side, you will pass under a great Romanesque doorway into a courtyard, once the site of a Renaissance hotel of which only an old window or two now remain to tell of its departed glories. On the right of that courtyard is a little house shaded by a great fig tree, beneath which, when I saw it, two women were sitting, busy with their needles. They were in the very heart of Arles, and yet far from it, in a little ancient haunt of their own; and there are others who have found a similarly central seclusion in the hidden ways of their city.

In a certain street in Arles—I must not say which one, lest the courteous proprietor should have reason to regret the day that he opened to me—stands a house which is, of its kind, the most extraordinary thing in adaptation that I have yet seen. For on entering what appear to be quite commonplace business premises, I found myself stepping upon the carved tombstones of a Gothic church, and standing in rooms that were cunningly devised among its aisles. Never before had I stood in a dining-room with, for ceiling, the richly-decorated ribs of late Gothic vaulting. The house for God had become a comely house for man. This is, no doubt, an exceptional case; but almost every building in Arles seems to have its own charming little surprises.

This afternoon I went into one quite close to the Arènes, where I found an upper floor ranged all round with squares of



COURTYARD OF THE ANCIENT HÔTEL NICOLAI.

twigs that were full of mulberry leaves, upon which myriads of silk-worms were feeding. In some of the squares the food had almost vanished, and the woman proprietor, who was showing me round, took an armful of fresh leaves from a stock that her children had just brought in, and poured it over the worms, upon whom it fell with a cool, soft sound, like that of rain. The woman told me that she feeds them four times a day, and that already, since the morning, they had eaten 400 kilos of leaves. Their short life divides itself into stages of eating and sleep. Four times they sleep, and the fifth time, instead of sleeping, spin the cocoons of silk which their owners sell at 4'25 the kilo.



AN OLD WOMAN OF ARLES.

The whole process of living and spinning occupies, I believe, about forty days.

By the time she had told me all this, and more besides, the caterpillars above which I was standing had begun already to eat their way into visibility through the shower of green that had buried them. I could literally see the leaves vanishing before my eyes — as the

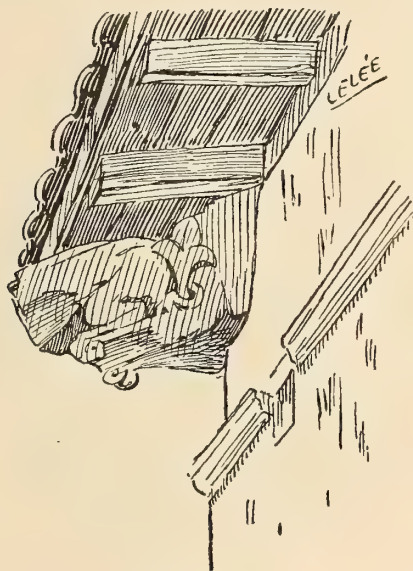
insatiable worms attacked them with untiring semicircular sweep of their little jaws. Stooping, I could hear the rumour of the feast, a delicious, soft, juicy, crunching sound, like the splash of lightest rain. Their guardian and I stood watching them together.

"And it is profitable, Madame, this pretty trade of yours?"

"Sometimes, Monsieur; and when it is so, tant mieux. But even were it to fail, I think that I should still go on with the work; I love it so well."

Mistral's words came back to me: "Galant soun le magnan."¹ I went to bed that night sad, because my stay at Arles was ended.

Fascinating little city of the South, jewel and pride of Provence, it is only now that I am about to leave you that I am beginning to know half your charms, to understand why there are those in this world who, native by birth, but alien by temperament from the gloomy North, after many years of wandering in search of a loveliness that should endure, have



EAVES TIMBERS.

come at last to an anchorage here, in a spot that has upheld for two thousand years the traditions of its unchanging beauty. And is not such a destiny the last dream and desire of all who follow after the ideal?

To-day I have been to the famous abbey of St. Gilles, whose façade is a beautiful elder sister of St. Trophimus, fashioned, probably, by the same architect, and showing, in the sculpture,

¹ See *Mireille*, Chant II., "Beautiful are the silk-worms."

the same extraordinary richness of mystic symbolism ; though, perhaps, with rather more effort, and less freedom, in treatment, than is displayed in the later building. But the effect of this façade, wonderful as it is, is greatly marred by the philistinism of a government that has permitted the erection before its steps of hideous iron railings, and above it, upon the body of the church, in staring black letters, " République Française. Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité."



Very good, Messieurs, but liberty to do what? To defile one of the most glorious of your monuments with iron railings below it, and nonsense above?

"If our young men had any blood in them," said a woman of St. Gilles, not very long ago, "they would go up there one fine night and wipe out that pretty inscription. Et tout le monde en serait content."

The interior of the abbey, which has been rebuilt, is modern and uninteresting, with the exception of the crypt, which is one of the finest I know. It was filled with débris until the middle

of last century, when excavations were undertaken, and the tomb of St. Gilles unearthed. Most of the saint's relics are still here, but some of the bones have been transported to St. Sernin at Toulouse.

The town of St. Gilles is not, on the whole, interesting. To one fresh from Arles the women are dull ; and the place is so given over to dogs, dirt, dust, and mosquitoes, that I leave it without regret, wondering what sort of a shelter St. Louis had found it, when, while waiting for his ships to be got ready for his second crusade, he passed two months here, "A cause des mauvais airs d'Aigues-mortes."



AN OLD WOMAN OF ARLES.



CHAPTER XX

LES SAINTES MARIES DE LA MER THE RELIGIOUS FÊTES

THE little village of Les Saintes Maries, that Barrès has called the saddest in the world, is busy preparing for its May-time fête. Along the lonely white roads of the Camargue, the gipsy caravans are moving towards the fortress church that has guided them for miles across the plain. Already they are dotted about the waste spaces between the village and the sea. Passing this encampment on the way from the station, I wish that I were a Lavengro, that I might talk with these mysterious people.

But, for the present, I am busy at the little hotel in the centre of the village street, arranging terms with the landlord, who is not slow to take advantage of his annual influx of visitors. He has no bedrooms available, but arrangements have been made for me to lodge in a little cottage nearly opposite to the hotel, looking out over the Place before the church. My entry causes great consternation. I am not yet expected, and the room is not ready, nothing is ready. There is much clattering and bustle. The old peasant proprietor, beneath a great, faded blue umbrella, trudges off

in the rain to fetch my luggage from the station. At the hotel there is much dirt and discomfort ; during luncheon I have for company two great hounds, who sit watching my every movement—and whom only kicks will move.

On the way to the curé's house, to procure a seat in the church for the coming services, I happen upon the well-remembered form, with the intellectual face beneath the fringe of white hair, just as he is coming from the cure across the *place* where the bull-fighting is to be—now occupied by preparations for the "Grand Bazaar Continental."

But at this moment Monsieur le Curé is just a little pre-occupied. "Monseigneur the Archbishop is just arriving," he tells me, and he himself must get shaved. So, for ten minutes, I loiter among the beginnings of the Bazaar, until Monsieur le Curé returns, to sell me, at the price of three francs, a seat in the tribune du chœur.

That transaction accomplished, I make for the Plage. The rain is over, but heavy clouds are still scudding across the sky, and the salt breeze brings to me the scent of the sea. The little houses of the street are fresh and clean, dressed in new coats of whitewash that are given them every year in honour of the fête. Casual tourists are beginning to arrive, and the gipsies are everywhere. Never have I seen human beings wilder-looking or more explosive than these last. The butcher's shop, which I enter for the purpose of acquiring mineral water, is full of them, copper-coloured, all talking at once.

"Tenez, vous avez de bons poids."

"Et puis encore pour deux sous de graisse." An unkempt child clings to the mother's skirt, whining, until it is pacified with a biscuit—you can obtain anything, it seems, at this shop. Before the Hôtel de la Plage men are playing bowls ; on the bushes across the road gipsies' clothes are spread out to dry.

It is good here on the Plage. The sky is grey and lowering ; a wild, fresh wind is driving white horses over the tumbling

green, and flicking the spray from the curling tops of breakers, as, falling with continuous rumble, they rush bubbling and hissing over the yellow sand. The gaily-hued, flat-bottomed, doubly-pointed fishing-boats are back from their cruise, and men and women are unloading ballast, and carrying baskets of shining mackerel to the shore. Far away, touched by a stray gleam of light, two sails flash brightly upon the inky cloud-belt of the horizon. The toll of the church bell comes to me across the sand-hills.

Away across the Camargue, the Mas for which I am bound gleams red and white in the distance. The roar of the Mediterranean surf is in my ears, and the rain is driven in sheets over the plain, as I pass between the sand-dunes and the étang. A great hawk rises from the roadside, and floats away over the water. Already I begin to feel and to understand the lonely fascination of a spot that draws and holds people here irresistibly, as it has drawn and held him to whose home I am making. Now I can see dotted about, here and there, in groups, the little black bulls that are part of the spell of the Camargue.

A side track leads to the Mas. The house is built of stone, and has a whitened front and a red-tiled roof. Before it is a little garden where cactus grows beside the door, and a tobacco plant lifts its pointed leaves, and cheerful crimson blossoms. Not far away is the thatched cottage of the gardiens, and a thatched barn and shed, all built towards the north, and showing upon the northern gable the cross that is a souvenir of the days when it was well to proclaim your orthodoxy to all comers from that quarter.¹

The Mas is furnished as simply as such a home should be. I notice a stuffed flamingo, the skin of a black ox, and, among other details, collars to keep the foals from teating, and nose-pieces for the calves. On the door hangs a hooded cloak to

¹ Simon de Montfort and the Albigensian crusaders.

which they give the Arab name, Bernous.¹ Already on the way here I had been reminded of life in the Western prairies, consequently I am not in the least surprised to hear my host speaking of "White Eyes," a Sioux chief, and other Indian friends whose photographs he shows me upon the walls. He sympathises fully with the redskins—as indeed should all dwellers in these plains—and has received American cowboys here before now. In remembrance of one such visit, one of the gardiens' white horses is named Buffalo Bill.



MAS IN THE CAMARGUE.

It is curious to note how the East and the West seem to meet in this Camargue. You have the bulls, the horses, and the wide, grassy spaces of the one; the red flamingoes, the sunset effects, and the great mirages of the other, all gathering round a little white village that is, in appearance, as much African as French.

But the sound of hoofs, and the appearance of a group of white horses, remind me that I have come here with a

¹ The Saracen occupation of the country naturally resulted in the introduction of many Arabic words.

particular object—that of seeing my host and his gardiens faire la trille—or, in other words, separate a number of bulls from the herd, and shut them up, in preparation for to-morrow's journey to Avignon, where they are wanted for a course provençale. Here is the cavalcade. Four white, bare-backed horses, small in build, come trotting across the road, led by a handsome, bronzed, graceful young gardien who runs like a deer. He wears short, check knickers that are turned up, revealing lithe, brown limbs splashed with mud. A white shirt and yellow slouch hat complete his costume.

The other attendants, already assembled, take each his horse to saddle. Before adjusting the straps, they twist up, as a woman does her hair, the long, white tails that have never been cut. Upon the flank of the best of the beasts I notice the arms of the owner branded.

They are fascinating little animals, these white horses of the Camargue—patient, gentle, and extremely intelligent. Just as our own sheep dogs have been endowed by nature with an instinct for their work, so these creatures have been given a natural aptitude for working bulls; and the riders tell me that were it not for the necessity of keeping them up to their duty—for even the horses here are inclined to take life easily—there would be almost no necessity to mount them. The animals know exactly what is required of them, and are masters of the science of bull-driving. Only, unless they have upon their backs some one who also knows, they will not put their theory into practice.

Excepting that of the little gardien, who rides bare-back—a gardien owning a saddle is already rich—all the horses are now saddled, and, in order more effectively to view the start, I leave the Mas and take up my position at a little gate beside a patch of cultivated land, close to a pool. A chorus of croaks rises from the water, and splash, splash go the frogs at my approach. The little gardien is already trotting away, ahead of the others, through the coarse grass and scrub; and

now the rest follow, circling out to enclose the cattle that are browsing all around. Soon all the horsemen have lessened into the distance, and I see only an occasional glimpse of white and black dots moving swiftly over the plain. Then I lose sight of them altogether, and am left, awhile, to my own meditations, and the music of the frogs. Now I can discern black specks that grow larger, and white spots following behind. They are seven black bulls chased by four white horsemen, coming nearer, nearer; the white animals making frantic efforts to prevent the black ones from breaking away on either side. Gradually the bulls are brought closer together, until, with a sudden dash, two of them swerve aside, and make straight for where I am standing. Hari! Hari! Hari! wild shouting, and the thud of hoofs. The white horses are after them, splashing through the marshes, squelching through the mud. The beasts see me, and swerve—at a gallop the black and the white thunder past. Now others are near the Mas. The doors of the great shed are open, and three of the beasts enter; but two go past, while two double back and rush towards me again, lumbering and lurching through the mud in a mad stampede. The white horses swing round, and the riders, waving their long tridents, urge them to a hand-gallop. Splendid the thunder of hoofs and the shouting: Hugga! Hugga! Hugga! The horses are as excited as the men, and are stretching out, ventre à terre; the bulls, missing their companions, and lacking the spur and the rein, cannot go the pace—they are overtaken, they are turned again, they are within the shed. The doors close, the trille is done. The riders are patting the damp necks of four placid, panting white horses.

After a moment's breather, the door of the shed is opened again. One bull comes out and trots quickly back to join his distant companions. He is an old hand at the game—a decoy bull who entered the shed first "pour encourager les autres." He is not by any means a tame animal, the gardien tells me, but "he understands."

By this time the white horses are all unsaddled, and have trotted quietly away across the road, to lose themselves again in the waste. Their demeanour is so gentle and subdued that one would hardly believe them to be the same beasts that, a few minutes ago, were thundering at a hand-gallop over the plain. I pay a visit to the bulls in their shed. At first, because already the day is falling, I can see nothing through the gloom; but little by little, as my eyes become accustomed to it, there take shape through the darkness the tossing, horned, black heads from which luminous balls shine out.

Ten minutes later I am riding home in the gloaming. Great masses of grey cloud, trailing wind-frayed fringes, are sailing over the flat; from the north the rising mistral moans, and one by one the sea-birds are winging their homeward way to night quarters beside the étang. Soon the flamingoes will be coming from the Vaccarès. Before me the village and the fortress church rise ghost-like from the plain. A red light flashes from across the sea, a golden one glimmers from a cottage. Night falls upon the Camargue.

This morning the mistral is blowing freshly in a sky of silver and blue. Long waves of shimmering light are floating over the grassy waste, and the sea rejoices. The Plage is alive with young gipsies and the boys of the village. Some of them are playing hop-skip-and-jump upon the sand—the larger and smaller ones in two parties. Others are swimming, others quarrelling; the air is loud with their voices. Now so many stones are lifted and so many sticks produced, that I think the quarrel is going to become serious, but ultimately it all fizzles out into a blow or two, some whining, and some tears.

The village is very busy and animated, for this is the first day of the religious fêtes. All around the old church the fair is in progress, and holy candles, toys, and trinkets of all kinds are selling in the gaily-coloured booths. Gipsy women are

buying beads and prayer-books, children are blowing shrill whistles, and are playing with balloons. Already a strong bourgeois element is here; gauzy motor-veils and gipsy handkerchiefs are moving side by side. I shiver as I go; for the bitter mistral is sweeping in great gusts across the *place*, and I am so chilled that—if only to warm myself for a moment—I enter, by a dark subterranean passage, into the church, which is filling for the morning service. All the east end is ablaze with candles, and the northern altars suggest the Bazaar outside, so bright are they with trinkets, tawdry pictures, and gaudy ex-voto offerings. Suddenly I remember that I am neither shaven nor shorn, and I retreat towards a sign that I know.

The barber is doing good business to-day. He is very big and dark and determined—a man intended by nature to be a blacksmith. But though he hurts his clients very much, he is efficacious, and has no serious rival in the village.

“Bonjour, Monsieur le Marquis.”

“Ah! comment allez-vous, Monsieur le Curé?”

“Ça va bien; seulement je suis un peu pressé.” Then, to the mighty barber, under whom I am groaning—

“You will take your soap and razor, and you will go to the cure to shave Monseigneur the Archbishop.”

“I will go at once, Monsieur le Curé.” The barber—he is very black—smiles darkly. There are greater than he who have not shaved an archbishop—to say nothing of Monsieur le Marquis. I wonder whether he hurts them as much as he hurts me?

’Tis one of the surprises of Les Saintes, that here, in this lonely village of the wilds, forty kilometres from civilisation, there is to be found a cultured and hospitable society. Had I been asked where, of all places in Provence, I should have expected to be most alone, I should have answered, “In Les Saintes Maries de la Mer”; and yet, by a strange and happy chance, I find myself here the recipient of an open-handed and open-hearted hospitality, and of a spontaneous kindness that I shall

remember always. My life here has something of the story-book about it.

I am told on all sides that, before the construction of the railway, the pilgrimage to Les Saintes was a much more impressive sight than it is now. Then only the devotees, or those who were genuinely interested, would undertake the fifty kilometres across the waste; but now the merely curious come in their hundreds. One has only to watch the arrival at the station of the morning train from Arles, to see how the fête has degenerated into a popular spectacle. Townspeople and Arlésiennes, bourgeois, and a heterogeneous crowd of curiosity-hunters stream in hundreds over the open space between the station and the town; and with every moment the collection of motor-cars increases. The streets swarm with monde. There are singers and mandoline-players before the cafés, and in front of the Hôtel de la Plage a hideously-arrayed, close-cropped clown is performing horrible feats of contortion, with the assistance of his apparently invertebrate family. Just beneath my bedroom window is crouching a ragged beggar, whose right shoulder is bared to show the naked stump of a missing arm. Above the hum and babble of the crowd his monotonous whine comes up to me with its ever-repeated formula: "Bons amis, pour l'amour de Dieu, vous qui faites la sainte pèlèrinage, faites l'aumône à celui qui le mérite, le pauvre estropié." I know that while, on my way to the inn, I lock the outer door of the cottage, I shall hear that whine again; and again those two eyes will fix upon me their appealing glance.

At three o'clock, armed with my pass to the tribune du chœur, I make for the church, into which I have literally to fight my way through the subterranean passage, black as Erebus, in which I bump, at intervals, against invisible, protesting figures. At last a ray of light comes to me, and, turning up a narrow staircase, I emerge upon a gallery—the tribune du chœur—whence I can look down over the whole



GIPIES IN THE CHURCH OF LES SAINTES
MARIES DE LA MER,

LE
ARLE

church; the nave on my right hand, and the raised choir on my left. The sight is very impressive, as one's glance, growing accustomed to the light that is semi-darkness after the glare outside, passes over the surging, singing mass of noisy humanity with which the church is already crammed, and up to the peaceful, grey barrel-vaulting of the ancient, romanesque roof. The great band of lighted candles between the choir and the nave throws a lurid light upon the forms of the little gipsy girl and two gipsy boys—the same whom I had seen fighting yesterday upon the Plage—now jealously guarding their charge. The glare falls, too, upon the group of fierce gipsy men and women—the latter with babies in their arms—who throng the steps before the altar, at the descent to the lower chapel, where a hundred of these strange Bohemians have been watching, all night, over the bones of Sarah, their own patron saint. Through the southern door, over the heads of the crowd that still struggles frantically for admission to the already packed building, a belt of sunshine streams in horizontally, lighting into colour and feature the forms and faces on its way. The two western galleries also are packed, and the dust motes may be seen dancing in the rays that stream from the upper windows. Against the topmost circular one are pressed the peering faces of spectators gathered on the path round the exterior fortifications.

The hubbub in the building is deafening. In the choir below me a group of women are singing with great fervour the peasants' favourite hymn—

“Je suis Chrétien, c'est là ma gloire,
Mon espérance et mon soutien,
Mon chant d'amour et de victoire,
Je suis Chrétien, je suis Chrétien.”

From the nave the refrain of another hymn, sung with equal enthusiasm, is rolling up to the roof. All who are not singing are talking. The chorus below me has ceased. “Vivent les

Saintes Maries!"—a great shout fills the building, drowning the other hymns. From the crypt below peals a deep, gipsy voice, "Vive la Sainte Sarah!" and the dark figures on the steps take it up, "Vive Sainte Sarah!" Every moment the heat is more stifling; the candles on the altar are bending and drooping, the melting wax streams from them. The gipsy boys are kept very busy, and so is the little girl. She is clumsy with a candle, and spills grease over the elder boy. He scowls, seizes the largest of the extinct candles, and threatens her with it. She retires precipitately to the other side of the altar.

Now, at last, the western doors are flung open, and the fierce light comes streaming in, revealing patches of colour, and bringing out faces and figures in vivid relief. For a moment I have a glimpse of the Place outside—then it is lost, as a wave of humanity surges round the doors. It is cooler already, but still the heat is very great. Another of the long candles succumbs.

Suddenly a loud clapping of hands is heard above the din that fills the building. Monsieur le Curé is in the pulpit. He motions for silence; claps again and again. Gradually the tumult lessens, the notes of the organ peal out, the first chant opens. A baby, in the arms of a gipsy, howls strenuously, and is promptly stifled with Bohemian ferocity and effectiveness.

After the chant the curé delivers a short eulogy of the saints, of which I can hear very little, owing to the sudden irruption, at short intervals, of a bevy of girls into the already crowded gallery. The audience applaud the close of the address with tremendous shouts of "Vivent les Saintes Maries!" The hymns break out with even greater fervour.

Now eyes are being lifted towards the upper chapel, from the door of which already I can see protruding the edge of the châsse in which the holy relics lie. Now, in the darkness of the vaulted roof, while the eager eyes gaze upwards, and, from the pulpit, the white-haired curé still leads the singing, I can see the châsse

projecting very slowly farther and farther into space ; and now, everywhere about the church and from the galleries, the lighted candles in the hands of the devotees begin to twinkle out, as the holy thing, all bright with flowers, drops inch by inch towards the table in the choir, round which an anxious group of gipsies is already gathered ; among whom I notice a pathetic, young, sunburned Bohemian with his head bound in a dirty handkerchief, two women, with sick children to be healed ; and one pale, frail, sick girl, gazing with imploring eyes. Hands above are braiding with flowers the ever-lengthening rope, as slowly, slowly the relics draw near. Every eye is fixed upon the *châsse*. From his seat at the back of the choir, the impassive face of Monseigneur the Archbishop of Aix, in his purple robes, and attended by a suite of clergy, looks on with unfeigned interest. The hymn dies away while we watch ; for the first time there is silence in the church.

Then, suddenly, there thrills through the building a deep, rich, contralto voice, raising the refrain of that magnificent Provençal hymn—

“ Grandi Santo,
Tout vous canto
En aquest jour
Vous dounan tout noste amour
Vous curbissen de flour.”¹

The singer is an Arlésienne next to me in the gallery. As the liquid notes die away, the audience takes them up, and a great wave of harmony rises to the vaulted roof.

The *châsse* is nearing its resting-place, and the candles below it are sparkling in my eyes. A man has mounted upon the table to receive it in his arms ; as he does so, he raises another song. But few join him. The church is loud with strange sounds ; voices and cries break out. Over the heads

¹ To you, great saints, we all sing this day.
We give you all our love,
We cover you with flowers.

of the crowd a child is handed to the man on the table, who takes him, presses him up against the under side of the descending châsse, then returns him to the mother, who hugs him closely to her breast.

Now the châsse is within reach. "Vivent les Saintes! Vivent les Saintes Maries!" The holy thing is besieged; upturned lips meet it with kisses as it comes, hands cling to

Li Carisso.
la niue



WORSHIPPERS AROUND THE CHÂSSE.

it convulsively, women, with babies in their arms, struggle to get near; children are passed over the serried heads, and held up to it; trinkets and shoes, umbrellas even, are being passed along, rubbed against the wood, then returned to be kissed by the owners, and to be pressed upon children's lips. The curé leaves the pulpit, the mass of the people stream out of the church, but around the châsse the struggle still continues.

This evening I go again to the church. Wishing, this time,

to be among the peasants in the nave, I make for the southern entrance. In the porch a group of women are standing, chattering as unconcernedly as though they were at their own doors. Suddenly there appears before us the figure of Monsieur le Curé, who, drawn here by the noise, has come to make an impassioned appeal for silence. Unfortunately, it is upon my innocent self that his eye first lights.

"Malheureux," he cries, recognising me, "why are you not in your seat?" My first instinct, naturally, is to defend myself; but, realising that this is hardly the time or place for words, I reserve my explanation for a future tête-à-tête, and make my way into the crowded nave.

I know now why the good curé was so eager for silence. In the pulpit is a young priest delivering, in the Provençal dialect, an impassioned eulogy of the Saintes Maries. This is the first time that I have heard the language spoken rhetorically, dramatically; and I now realise how well its rich and sonorous cadences serve the art of declamation. The preacher's elocution and technique are so perfect, and are enforced by gesture so striking and appropriate, that, ignorant as I am of the language, I can yet understand clearly the tenor, and sometimes whole phrases of the discourse. But not all the audience are so well satisfied as I am, and the behaviour of the majority of those around me, judged by our English standard, is, to speak mildly, indecorous. People are rising, sitting again, staring about them, talking to their friends, passing in and out of the church in an entirely casual manner, utterly oblivious of the fact that an orator is in the pulpit. A man near me is muttering audibly, "Qu'il se couche, celui-là, qu'il se couche; il m'embête, cet animal là." Then he spits copiously upon the floor.

This double breach of manners is more than I can stand, and I suggest to him that, if he is unhappy, he had better go out. But the wretch only slinks a few yards farther down the gangway, where I hear him muttering again, "Qu'il se couche; il m'embête, cet animal là."

None but myself seem to find his behaviour in the least degree improper. Monsieur le Curé's appeals for silence are never more than moderately successful—for this people is disorderly in its very bones.

Night and morning I go to pay homage to the sea; and very soothing I find the change. Here one escapes for a while from the noise and stress of the fête, from the crude and feverish religion that, around the dust of dead women, would fain "realise its ideals," and get "right with God," to this golden plage where nature has perfectly realised her own ideal, and merged into an infinite harmony her mysterious trinity of earth, and sea, and sky.

It is good to see the gipsies watering their white horses. Splendid the agility with which they leap upon their backs, and the grace with which they sit them, as the beasts splash out into the waves. Here is a group of fishermen launching their boats. I sit long watching them, watching the waves, the white sails swelling to the wind, and lessening towards the meeting line of clouds and water.

This morning there is a service at which the archbishop will speak to the people. I find the crowd in the church as dense and as unruly as ever, the atmosphere equally suffocating. Many of them are singing away the minutes before the commencement of the service. The favourite hymn is that fine national song—

" Dieu de clémence,
O Dieu Sauveur,
Sauvez, sauvez la France
Par votre sacré cœur."

The refrain is taken up again and again, and is still in full swing when the audience begins to observe that the curé, from the pulpit, is making vigorous efforts to obtain silence.

At first he does not get it; but he perseveres, knowing that inexhaustible patience, combined with firmness, is the only way to deal with his unruly children. Now the purple figure of the archbishop is seen forcing his way through the throng, towards the pulpit; the women kissing his hand as he passes. He mounts and steps forward to the balustrade, looking down and round with half a smile upon the excited congregation. But to attempt to speak would be useless. Three hundred tongues are doing so already; "Dieu de clémence" still rolls up from the nave, and the people are altogether out of hand. Behind him the curé stands, thumping upon the back of the pulpit, and waving his hands for silence. Gradually, very gradually, the din subsides. The archbishop begins his discourse—the white-haired guardian angel standing behind him, and waving silencing arms, like wings, over the preacher's head.

Monseigneur, a persuasive and polished speaker, reminds the people of what has brought them here—love for the Church, in the very family of whose Founder are the Saintes Maries whom they are celebrating. Then he proceeds with an eloquent appeal for loyalty to that Church, and for implicit obedience to the will of its supreme head upon earth. Finally he reads a letter which he has written to the Pope, on behalf of the congregation, and appeals to them to add the name of the Holy Father to the applause with which they are greeting the memories of the great saints of Provence. A shout arises, "Vivent les Saintes Maries!" The archbishop looks around him expectantly, and the curé's voice is heard, "Vive le Saint Père!" Silence. Then from the end of the nave, three or four shrill women's voices pipe out, "Vive le Saint Père!" It is not to do honour to the Pope that these thousands are in Les Saintes to-day.

The archbishop leaves the pulpit, and makes his way through a crowd which presses to kiss the hand that, smiling, he lays, now and again, upon a child's head. From the

balcony the melodious voice of the Arlésienne rings out over the church, and all the congregation take up the refrain—

“ Grandi Santo,
Tout vous canto
En aquest jour
Vous dounan tout noste amour,
Vous curbissen de flour.”

Leaving the building I make my way to the beach, to await the coming of the procession. Every year, at the time of this festival, to commemorate the landing of the holy Maries upon their shores, the people of Les Saintes carry, in solemn procession from the church to the sea, the mediæval carving of the boat in which Marie Salome and Marie Jacobi are seated. Already I can see the foremost banners dancing through the narrow street; and now, headed by Monsieur le Curé, they leave the village, and, passing through the gipsy encampment in the waste between the houses and the sea, make towards the crowd that, gathered already upon the upper part of the Plage, divides to let them pass. After the banners follow the women singing the hymns of the saints. The long procession streams down to the sands, and turns along the shore close behind the fishing-boats, whose prows are just touched by the lightest of the ripples. The curé mounts one of the boats that is all decorated with gay bunting and French flags, whence, standing upon its stern, he watches the line that already has lost all form, and is beginning to dawdle along in a desultory, utterly disorganised manner, as its various members desert it, to mingle and exchange greetings with friends among the crowd. In Provence even a procession is disorderly.

The scene, as a whole, is gay and animated, full of life, colour, and movement, as the light pours upon the sea, upon the bright Arlesian costumes and sunshades of the spectators grouped upon the beach. Now the crowd grows denser, and there approaches a group of struggling, dark figures, in the midst of which, almost hidden among grasses and flowers, I can



THE PROCESSION TO THE SEA.

To face page 274.

just see the bobbing heads of the mediæval figures in their boat. What a strange crowd it is that surges round them—a swarm of black heads, of fierce, swarthy, gipsy faces, and of brown hands clinging frantically to the holy boat, as though to the last hope of salvation. Woe to any daring fingers that would carry off, as a trophy, a blade of those grasses or a bloom of those flowers! The gipsies permit no tampering with their saints.

The remnants of the procession wind round landwards over the grass-covered sand-dunes, on their return journey to the village. From my bedroom window I am just in time to see the boat pass into the church; the same cloud of shock heads buzzing and swarming about it, like bees around their queen.

The last of the religious services is that of the elevation of the châsses—marking the close of the sacred festival. All the scenes that had characterised the previous services were repeated, only with yet deeper fervour and enthusiasm; and when the final moments came, and the devotees' lights began again to twinkle out in the church, and the chässe to rise from its table, the audience, tense with excitement, broke out into one mighty shout of "Vivent les Saintes Maries!" hands were outstretched for one last touch, lips put up for one final kiss; and, as the dust of the saints rose, children were lifted high above their parents' heads, and there held until the rope had taken the chässe from the clasp of their little hands. Even I, sceptic as I was, could not but feel moved as I heard the sobs of the women, and saw the dim eyes of the sick gipsy and the frail girl, now more agonised than before, raised, in one last despairing appeal, towards their vanishing hope.

Even in modern years, however, the congregation at these fêtes is occasionally electrified by the cry of "Miracle, miracle!" as one of them, more often a young girl, announces a sudden healing. The last case occurred, I believe, some two or three years ago; but the sufferer's relief was only temporary, and, as soon as the excitement of the fête had calmed down into a

memory, the disease returned. But a long-time resident at Les Saintes has told me that some of the scenes which, in years gone by, he has witnessed in the church, have been so intensely pathetic that he—an unemotional man—has found himself trembling from head to foot as he watched them. He told me how, one day, he had seen, at the last service, a woman, very ugly, but made beautiful by ecstasy, holding over the ch^âsse her blind child that, in certainty of cure, she had been presenting for three days past to the saints. When she saw the ch^âsse rising, and her child still blind, she stretched out her arms towards it and cried aloud to the saints her last frantic appeal—

“Open his eyes, open his eyes, open his eyes!” She turned an agonised face to her boy—

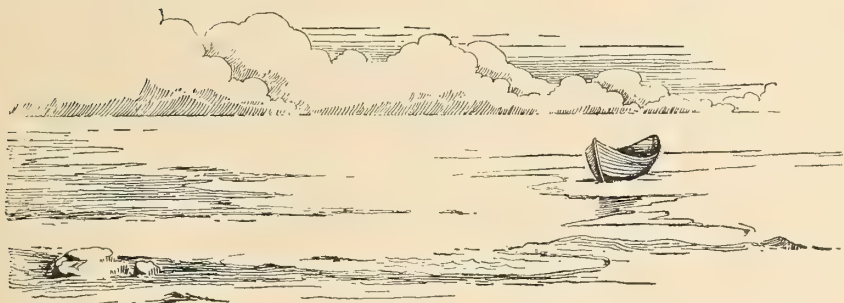
“Do you not see? do you not see?” And when the reply came in childish treble, “*Je ne vois rien, je ne vois rien,*” and the blind eyes still stared upward, the mother, realising at last that the saints had withheld their aid, reeled; and, heart-broken, sank down upon the floor.

For the gipsies the disappearance of the ch^âsse concludes the f^{ête}. Immediately after the close of the service they are harnessing their caravans in the open spaces between the village and the station, and, five minutes later, the procession of shabby vehicles and scarecrow horses, bearing their burden of strange, swarthy wanderers of the world, lessens and vanishes down the long, white road that leads away northward into the heart of the Camargue.

The religious portion of the festival is over. For the next two days Les Saintes Maries de la Mer will be given over to civil rejoicing and to the bulls. The interregnum is a very short one. The people move straight from the church to the racecourse, whither already is proceeding a brazen little band, headed by a man carrying the national flag. I follow them, and find a number of onlookers already gathered. The competitors—gardiens on bull-farms and so forth—ride in their everyday costume, “à la Indien,” that is to say, bare-back, with only a

bridle on the animal. They do a double turn of the ring at a fine pace, and the winner is surrounded by an acclaiming crowd as he reins up his little grey horse.

But I had had enough, for a while, of excitements and of crowds; and it was with a sigh of great relief that I found myself wandering away from Les Saintes for a solitary walk along the shore. After all, happy as I have been here, I believe that my best moments were not those in which I listened to the passionate rhetoric of the abbé, to the dignified eloquence of the archbishop, nor to the rolling refrain of "Grandi Santi"; nor were they those which witnessed the thrilling sounds and sights that accompanied the lowering and the ascent of the châsses. They were rather the moments when, walking over the golden sand, towards the crimson sunset that was purpling the distant hills and flashing upon the scarlet roof of the lonely Mas, I listened to the long, white ripples that were singing, in the twilight, the solemn vespers of the sea.



CHAPTER XXI

LES SAINTES MARIES DE LA MER THE CIVIL FÊTES

TO-DAY is to be a day with the bulls. A course provençale will be given this afternoon in the ring beside the church, and I am going to see the animals brought across the Rhône to the village. Before eight in the morning I am on my bicycle, making for the little white Mas with the red roof, before which is gathered already a curiously mixed assemblage, comprising the very last individuals that one would have expected to meet in such a spot and at such a time.

What on earth, for example, is that little round, actor man doing—he in the strange garments, who, with his back to the company, is adjusting his wig, or otherwise making himself up, peeping and posing, for all the world as though he were in his dressing-room at the Odéon? And who is this big, bearded man in the slouch hat and brown corduroys, the young handsome one in peasant costume, looking terribly bored; and the fat, bearded individual talking to the distinguished-looking lady? And who? who? is the beautiful Arlésienne in the deep blue costume, her dark hair massed above a pale, proud face? Ah! I know now! These are the cinematograph actors who have come to do *Mireille* here amid the true local colour. The little round comedian is the father; the bored youth is Vincent; and the pretty girl à l'Arlésienne is Mireille. They make a variety, but their presence seems to be strangely at variance with the spirit of the place, and would surprise me, were I not, by this time, proof against all surprises at Les Saintes.

In carriages and on cycles we make towards the Rhône over the flats; and in a few minutes we are at the slight descent to the ferry. The scene is a very pleasant one. Before us the river, bordered on each bank by patches of scrub, shines in the early morning sun; and, at its bend, a great belt of trees throws cool reflections into the water. The breeze that ruffles its surface is sweet with the scent of the sea. The occupants of the carriages disperse along the nearest bank; and we are left almost alone.

Suddenly there is shouting from the farther bank; distant visions of black cattle and of horsemen moving, through dust-clouds, among the bushes and the scrub. Another volley of halloos; and, closely pursued by the horsemen, the beasts come cantering down the bank, and plunge boldly into the water. But in a moment we see that they are halting, turning towards the bank again, where they stand intercepted by the horsemen and the threatening tridents. The bulls, accustomed to an almost unbroken solitude, have seen figures upon the opposite side, and will not cross. A second endeavour to drive them into the river results only in a stampede in which bulls and horses are lost to sight and sound among the bushes.

Quite near me, by the water-side, two peasant girls stand watching the struggle on the opposite bank. Very charming they are, these slim daughters of the waste, so gracefully poised, with their hands on their hips; while from under the large, pink and white sun-bonnets their laughter goes ringing out across the water. Horsemen are passing and repassing over the ferry. Again and again the bulls are driven down the bank and sent plunging into the water; only, again and again, to return. The thing begins to look hopeless, and I am wondering whether we shall have our course to-day, when I hear murmurs of "*L'amarée; l'amarée, they will cross there*"; and in a moment the whole cavalcade—carriages, horsemen, cyclists, peasants in their *jardinières*, Vincent, the pretty Mireille and all—are spinning back down the road beside the river,

towards its junction with the sea. We all dismount at the dyke and make for the bank.

Wild shouting, thunder of hoofs; and two bulls come lumbering past me, crashing through the scrub, to plunge, splashing and snorting, into the stream. They are decoys for the others that I can see already approaching the farther bank. Again the troop take the water, and, lured on this time by two decoys, they come towards us fearlessly. The horns and heads draw nearer, and now the sun is flashing upon shining hides. Close to the bush in which I am crouching I hear a splash and a sound as of something dripping. A great, horned head appears above the rushes, and glares wildly round, like some prehistoric water-beast emerging from the waves. The bull brushes through the reeds and bushes, and, in the open, looks round for his companions. Another of the beasts lands right opposite to the cinematograph machine, which has been placed within a few feet of the water. He stops before the strange phenomenon, and stares at it with a most comical look of bewilderment upon his bovine countenance. Then his head begins to drop suspiciously, and I wonder whether it is not time for the intrepid operator—who all this time has been turning the handle unflinchingly—to desert his post. But the hero still grinds on; and his black sitter, suddenly thinking better of it, wheels off to the right, to join his brethren, whom the gardiens have already brought together.

Here is another curious sight upon the banks of the river. Mireille is about to rehearse the scene in which, while crossing the Camargue on her journey to Les Saintes Maries, there to petition the holy women for the recovery of the wounded Vincent, she falls sun-stricken beside the Rhône. We all withdraw to a respectful distance, and the big, bearded impresario advances to the bank, and begins to stagger strangely about in illustration of his idea of what is wanted. But the beautiful little Arlésienne is in no need of an instructor. In a moment, with her head thrown back, arms outstretched, eyes wildly

staring, Mireille is staggering along the river-bank, falling, recovering herself, falling again in a quite realistic manner. The impresario watches her in ecstasy.

“Un peu plus vite. Tombez . . . Relevez-vous . . . Encore une fois à genoux . . . C’est très bien; c’est magnifique.” And when the little actress, her Arlesian bonnet fallen, and her long black hair loosened and streaming down her shoulders, collapses, and falls prostrate by the river-bank, the enthusiasm of the impresario can no longer be restrained. He runs to her, lifts her, kisses the white hand he holds: “Ah cette petite là. Elle a une sincérité; une sincérité. Je vous le dis devant tout le monde.” Mireille seems scarcely to be aware of him, and receives with equal impassivity his praises and his caress; only she takes the little ribbon which he has picked up for her, and her hands rise instinctively to her loosened hair. She has not yet recovered her own individuality. Something of the *profond douleur* of her heroine is yet gnawing at the heart of the young actress.

But if I stay here any longer, I shall be too late to see the entry into the village of the bulls, that, tended by the *gardiens* on their white horses, are already making their way slowly—they must be very tired—over the grass towards the road leading to the village. Moreover, the atmosphere of the foot-lights is not what I came to breathe here en pleine Camargue.

We make for the village. At the entrance to it nearly all the male inhabitants—many in their shirt-sleeves—are gathered to meet the bulls; and, at a respectful distance from the road, their womenkind are assembling in little groups. For some few moments we wait; and then I can see, far across the plain, a little cloud of advancing dust; and now the light flashing upon the white horses. Excitement increases as they draw nearer and nearer—the horsemen surrounding the troop of heavily cantering bulls. The villagers close up into a solid phalanx, and advance along the road to exercise their traditional privilege of endeavouring to break up the cavalcade. As

the bulls draw near, every man begins suddenly to dance wildly, to wave his arms, and shout like a maniac. The white horses close round their prisoners; the gardiens, urging on the bulls, and holding firmly their long tridents, make at full canter for the crowd of dancing dervishes who bar the way. Till the last possible moment the men hold firm; then, as the horses are upon them, they break and scatter to each side of the road. The smallest of the bulls, maddened with fear, breaks through the guard of horses, and makes across the road for the open plain.

As he does so he stumbles and pauses. In an instant, before he can recover, the hunters, with a shout of triumph, are upon him, and, in less time than it takes to write it, no portion of the bull is visible; he is the centre of a swarm of humanity who hold him by horns, limbs, and tail. Already the other bulls and their gardiens have vanished into the narrow streets of the village, and I venture to approach the captive. He is now quite tame and passive, as indeed he must be, with two men hanging on to each horn, and others on to his legs, or to any portion of his anatomy that offers possibility of a grip. And so, amid loud rejoicings, he is pushed along towards the village, not without occasional thrills and precipitate flight on the part of the less courageous, when, at intervals, the black captive makes a wrench for freedom. They take him straight to the little ring which has been fitted up beside the church where yesterday they were worshipping their saints; and there, before retiring to fortify themselves against the more serious fatigues of the afternoon, they have a little impromptu with him, while his happier companions are resting in their shed. And the moral of the incident is—I said to myself—Don't be frightened by mere noise.

They love their bulls—these villagers of Provence. Bull-baiting—the word fighting cannot rightly be used of the course provençale—is an institution deeply rooted in the affections of a people that has no other national sport. But it would be

wrong to draw the inference that, childish, in a sense, and somewhat barbarous as the course provençale is, the people care for it merely as an authorised occasion for ill-treating the animals. The Provençals, and, in particular, the inhabitants of the Camargue, of which the beasts are native, are genuinely fond of their bulls; and the courses give them an opportunity of getting, so to speak, more into touch with the ways of the beasts, and of interesting themselves in the processes of their somewhat obscure intelligences. Moreover, the amateurs of the course provençale need to show, and do show, considerable courage, skill, and agility, if they are to come out of the ordeal with a cockade, instead of a punctured skin, for their pains. These considerations, and not mere love of cruelty—though that, too, may influence some of the enthusiasts—account for the popularity of bull-baiting in Provence; and however inadequate they may seem to a Northern mind, they are not so when we remember that the Provençals are a people naive and very easily pleased.

But, whatever its cause may be, none can deny the fascination that the bulls exert. There are in Provence to-day educated men who, drawn to the Camargue by that spell, have given up much in order that they may enjoy a free life among these black rangers of the plain. And the gardiens, too, become equally fond of them. They know each beast by name—they give them often historic names; Carnot, Fallières, and the like—and each animal “answers” to his own, and, when lagging, will hurry up on hearing it; knowing well that failure to do so means a prod behind from that pointed trident.

From the upper room of a little house overlooking the bull-ring, which yesterday was the *place* occupied by the booths of the fair, I am to see what is to be seen. Opposite to me, forming the northern boundary of the ring, is the grey-gold wall of the ancient church, showing the green wall-flowers in its crannies. The other boundaries of the *place* consist mainly of

cottages and the curé's residence. In front of these are barriers constructed of three horizontal poles, about two feet apart. The lowest one is two feet from the ground, and all are fastened to occasional uprights. Between the barrier and the cure is the bandstand, formed of some planks laid across three tubs standing on end; close beside it is the solidly fenced wooden pen where the bulls await their ordeal. Within the ring, which is really a square, and close to the church wall, is a white board, some four feet high, upon which is rudely painted, in full face, the form of a black bull. The object of this effigy, behind which a human figure is already in hiding, is, I believe, to remove from the bull's mind any feeling of loneliness which might tend to lessen his activity. Not far from the board, in the corner, is a tub standing on end.

The scene is animated and picturesque. Already, on the bandstand, the musicians are braying, and within the ring, youths are wreathing the farandole. Standing beside the barriers, and leaning over them, are all the girls of the village, dressed in their brightest clothes, animated, chattering, laughing; each eager to reward with a glance of her beaux yeux—and later on with more substantial favours—the prowess of her particular amateur. At the windows, on the barriers, and in the spaces that the girls have left, are the older men, who to-day will live over again the golden hours of their youth. Several of them are lying, almost within the ring, on heaps of straw that, to give comfort to their old bones, they have strewn under the lowest bar of the barrier. They lounge there, quite fascinatingly insouciant, smoking at their ease. They can roll into safety in a moment, when the dark horns come too near.

And the jeunesse dorée of Les Saintes, they who are going to do the deeds of daring, are everywhere, standing in groups within the ring, and leaning over the barriers upon one another's backs. Up against the wall of the church is a large, open cart crowded with girls and children. Already a youth is dancing upon the tub. In the lime tree by the cure an old blue-bloused

peasant sits smoking, and behind the counterfeit bull an amateur is half concealed, sitting upon a chair. A trumpet calls. A moment later the door of the pen opens, and a neat little black bull, with a red, white, and blue cockade upon the centre of his forehead, trots into the ring, sending its more daring occupants flying towards the barriers. In the centre of the ring he stops, looks about him, paws the ground with his right fore-foot, backing a pace or two as he does so. A man in his shirt-sleeves approaches, throws his cap into the bull's face, and retires precipitately. The animal sniffs at the cap, tries to butt it, and then, realising that it is time some one is livened up, charges the nearest amateur, who makes a dash for the barrier, and is over it in a moment. This brings the bull close to his painted brother on the board. The counterfeit catches his eye, and he stands before it with much interest, looking ludicrously puzzled. The man hidden behind the board peeps round the edge, taps the bull on the forehead with a stick, and withdraws again into seclusion. The bull, not knowing what to make of it, returns to the centre of the ring, to think things over.

Two gardiens come forward, side by side, each holding a trident. Smack comes the head of the bull against the double row of steel points. The pain rouses him; he bellows, paws the ground, and charges furiously at a man in a pink shirt who has been creeping up upon his right-hand side. Pink shirt runs for his life. The women shriek, the men cheer, the bull gains. Will he? Will he not? The horns are close behind him—gaining. Had the barrier been a solid one, pink shirt were undone; for there is no time to climb it. He dives headlong, as into water, over the lower rail, and alights with a thud among the skirts of the scattering girls. His arms are scratched and bleeding. The bull looks round for his next challenger; but even the bravest of them are getting shy. The risks that the poor villagers of Provence will run, for five francs, are limited. This bull is méchant, and they are all afraid of him. I begin to think that the course provençale is a rather more

dangerous proceeding than I had supposed. A trumpet sounds, and a moment later—the beast being near the pen—the door is opened ; and, still sporting his cockade, he quietly joins his companions.

Again the door opens. Another black form emerges at a lively trot, and runs at the nearest man in a quick, nervous, irresponsible sort of a manner that contrasts strongly with the more businesslike and determined methods of the predecessor. This animal is all on springs ; alert, nervy, inconsequent. It chases every man, and yet no man seems greatly to fear it ; for it will not pursue to the bitter end, but is always turning off after some one, or something else, and keeps all the company stirring. Then I perceive that this is no bull, but a petite vache ; excited, furious—a very feminine and lively little vache. Now down goes her head again, and she begins a furious circular charge right round the ring, so close to the barrier that the horns protrude beyond it. Shriek after shriek goes up from the girls as they scatter from their places ; there are yells and roars of laughter ; men are vaulting, climbing frantically, girls are falling ; the old corks, full length on the hay, are rolling away into safety ; a long wave of black, white, grey, and brown behinds rises and disappears over the barrier.

Wildly circles the little vache, driving the chairman from his ambush behind the painted bull, chasing the dancer from his tub, and finally plunging, to a crescendo of piercing screams, beneath the cart full of girls and children. The contact of the woodwork with her back is comforting, and, heedless of the ever-increasing tumult of shrieks and laughter, and of the half-dozen men who are already crouching in frog-like attitudes round the cart, endeavouring, by gesticulations, dirt-throwing, and nasty noises, to attract her out into the open, she begins to rub herself against the floor of the vehicle, which heaves slightly. By this time some of the girls are hysterical ; so are some of the men—with laughter. At last a noise, more particularly hideous than the others, withdraws the

cow from sanctuary. She comes out between the wheels; the men scuttle, and dive under the rail. She indulges in one more sprint round the ring, and then stops awhile to rest, and particularly to observe the curiously fascinating signs and contortions which a man in grey trousers is making, some ten feet only in front of her eyes.

But this very natural curiosity is her undoing. For, at that moment, an individual clad in white, whom I had picked out some time since as being among the most alert and courageous of them all, comes running, from behind, at a tremendous pace, past her right flank. He swerves to the left, across her head, and, as he passes, with a quick downward sweep of the left hand, takes the cockade, and climbs the barrier amid a volley of applause. The others continue for a while to be chased by the cow; but interest vanishes with the cockade, and she soon retires in favour of a sterner animal—though not before she has won the goodwill of all concerned by the way in which she has enlivened the proceedings.

There is no doubt that the cows afford the most amusing sport. They are much more lively than the bulls, and being at the same time less ferocious, no one fears them, and consequently all the men will venture something for fame. Most of the amateurs, on the other hand, are obviously afraid of the bulls, and, when the latter are in the ring, will not venture far from the barrier, preferring to leave the cockades to be taken—if taken at all—by the experts. At these local courses three out of every four cockades are won, not by the boys or men of the village, but by little trios of semi-professionals who follow the fêtes through the whole country, working together, and sharing the proceeds. The white-garbed winner of the first cockade was one of these gentry; and the man who attracted the cow's attention the while was one of his confederates.

Nevertheless the dangers of the Provençal "bull-fight" are, to a cool and active man, not nearly so considerable as they

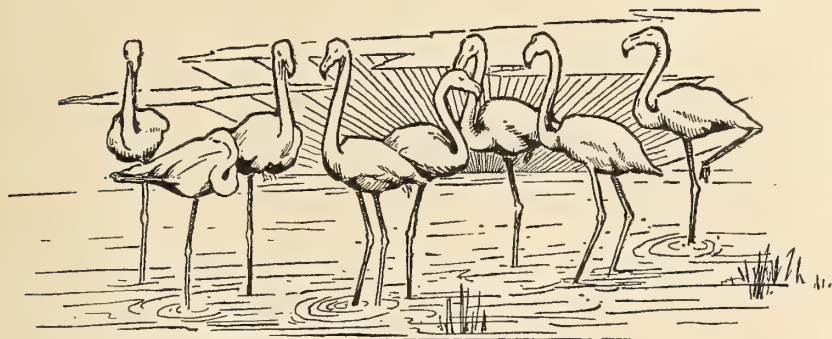
would appear to be. As a rule, the casualties are not more serious than a scratched arm or torn trousers, and the risks run are as nothing compared with those of either Rugby or Association football. The reason for this is found in the comparatively pacific temperament of the bulls of the Camargue. They do not, as a rule, become sufficiently roused to "push home" their advantage; and as soon as a man is near the barrier, they will abandon the chase. Moreover, the peasants are generally very prudent, and when, as in the case of the first bull let into the ring to-day, they see that he is méchant, they are quite content to postpone cockade-snatching to a more favourable opportunity.

Most Englishmen, and many Frenchmen, consider even these Provençal bull-fights to be a very barbarous form of amusement; but they appear to me to be childish and inane rather than positively cruel, and I am not at all sure that the bull is always the most unhappy creature in the ring. That, to a nation as easily amused as are the Provençals, these spectacles afford much lively comedy, cannot be denied; and, in the absence of worthier sports, they certainly give to the jeunesse of the country some good exercises in courage and agility. It is typical of the absence of the idea of organisation from the Provençal mind, that only the semi-professionals appear to have any concerted scheme for winning the cockades. Apart from those few cliques the motto is "chacun pour soi."

During the half-time interval, while the sous are raining from the upper windows into the coat that is being carried round, and all the amateurs are cooling themselves before the café in the village street, my host tells me tales of the courses of past years—how once, to his great consternation, he slipped off the fence into the ring, in close proximity to the bull, and was only rescued after moments of acute suffering each time that the animal looked his way. He tells me, too, how some years ago a young girl of eighteen, fleeing through the village before the incoming bulls, took refuge in their stable, where

seven of them were driven in upon her, and she was forced to pass two never-to-be-forgotten hours in their company.

We were still talking while the men and women re-assembled, and the sport began again; but I soon wearied of it, and departed for a stroll by the sea, returning just in time to witness the departure of the bulls from the village. On this occasion the thoughtful crowd, with a view to enhancing the efficacy of their demoniac attempts to break up the cavalcade, had lighted a bonfire of straw in the middle of the road. But, as in the morning, all the animals got through with scarcely a swerve, excepting only the poor little neurotic bull, who again broke away and endeavoured to escape, but fell, utterly exhausted, by the roadside. He was again swarmed upon by a cloud of yelling humanity, who, however, seeing that he had had enough, soon released him. I watched him get on to his knees and wander off, at last, dejectedly across the plain. I hope that he did not lose himself, for I am told that lost bulls, hereabouts, have a way of disappearing mysteriously—a phenomenon that certain inhabitants of the village could elucidate if they would.



CHAPTER XXII

AMONG THE FLAMINGOES

YESTERDAY the bulls, to-day the flamingoes. A certain stern, Roman-headed peasant who has lived these forty years past in the Camargue, and knows it, in all seasons, from the great to the little Rhône, is going to take me for a day's drive, in his jardinière, to the borders of the Vaccarès, in search of the flamingoes that—"foi de lion"—he has sworn to bring me to. I have always, somehow, been a little sceptical concerning the presence here of these birds, of which I have heard so much and seen nothing, with the exception of a stuffed specimen that Monsieur le Marquis shot one evening as it was flying home to roost. I shall not believe, until a sight of their crimson wings has set the seal of the very East upon this strange Southern land. For the flamingoes were originally African birds, though centuries must have passed since the rumour of another good delta, not so very far away, northward of the great blue sea, sent some of the least satisfied of them winging from the Nile to establish their new colony by the Rhône.

Well, at eight o'clock in the morning, the Roman rattles up to the Hôtel de la Poste; and after a hand-shake—a little surprising at first, but quite usual in democratic Provence—we are rolling off along the open road, the mistral humming in our faces. There is, in this plunge into the heart of the wind-swept waste of sullen pools and marshes, a pleasant sensation of closeness to nature in one of her most desolate moods. Upon both sides of the road extends the salt-encrusted mud, covered with scrub and sparse grasses, above which, here and

there, a tamaris bush bends and quivers in the wind. Beyond away eastward, as far almost as the eye can reach, is water—water, cold, grey, and wicked, bounded by a black line that is the wood on the farther side of Vaccarès. Soon we leave the road—or what passes for a road—and turn the old, white mare towards the most desolate part of the waste, over which, jolted, shaken, and sometimes almost upset, we rattle along through mud and bushes, ditch and dyke. One has to keep one's mouth shut, and clutch firmly the side of the cart.

Now we draw near to one of the ponds, and I see, on the borders of it, against the sun, certain objects that have the appearance of little black posts projecting above the quiet water. But who would have put black posts there? An idea comes to me.

"Are those flamingoes?" I ask the Roman.

"No, Monsieur, not yet; but we shall see many du côté du Vaccarès." We trundle on. As we alter our position relatively to them and to the sun, I notice that the black posts are turning grey; and now that we are on the sunny side of them, they no longer look like posts at all, but have changed shape, and show almost like a flock of sheep watering at the pond.

"Are you quite sure those are not flamingoes?" I ask the guide.

"I was wrong, Monsieur; they are certainly flamingoes. Would Monsieur like to get as near to them as we can?"

I assent. We leave the cart, and, followed by the Roman's little brown spaniel, that has been clipped from the shoulders tailwards—making it look ridiculously like a miniature lion—we start towards the birds. The extent of dry, cracked mud that borders the étang shows how fast the water is disappearing before the spring winds and sunshine. Gradually the mud becomes damp, then wet and soft. By this time the sheep have resolved themselves into large, long-legged, white birds, lightly tinged with pink, standing in the pond, in about six inches of water; some motionless, sentinel-like, others bend-

ing down their long necks to feed upon the small shell-fish below. It is a strange sight, and, of its kind, a beautiful one—these limitless horizons, the expanses of the wet, shining mud, the pink birds standing in the ruffled waters of the pond. But already, before we are within two hundred yards of them, the long necks are lifted, the sentinels are in movement, the alarm is given in the camp. Now they are all walking hurriedly away, until, suddenly, a thousand gloriously shaded crimson wings are beating the air, and the sun is flashing upon a rosy cloud that floats away eastward, to pale, with a beautiful downward curve, into light pink again, as the wings close, and the birds drop to the blue water a mile away.

We tramp back to our cart, and drive on to the next étang, where, in order to obtain a repetition of one of the most lovely colour effects that nature has yet given to me, we repeat our disturbing journey across the mud, and put up another crimson cloud. The birds, watched individually, look very quaint, with their long legs stretched out behind to balance the long necks. I question the Roman about them. It appears that they live here happily enough, finding plenty of food, and changing their quarters as often as the fall or rise of the water, and the necessity of obtaining shelter from the mistral, may compel them to do so. It seems that some of them migrate to the Nile during the winter, but the majority remain, and have occasionally to pay dearly for doing so; for, in the severest winters, the birds are sometimes so numbed and stupefied by the cold that they are unable to move, and will allow themselves to be knocked on the head without making any effort to get away.

We drive on towards Vaccarès, through a scene of flatness and desolation, that is, nevertheless, not lacking in animal life. Here and there the ground is swarming with great grasshoppers; a rabbit darts from under the horse's feet, and dashes off in zigzags towards the nearest scrub; a flight of wild duck rises from the étang and vanishes over the distant flock of flamingoes;

a black-headed gull screams as it passes down the wind ; great hawks hover in the air. The wing feathers and skulls of small birds, scattered among the grasses, testify to the little tragedies of the Camargue. But birds of prey greater than hawks are to be found here. In severe weather the Egyptian vulture is sometimes seen ; and it is not many winters back that a villager told how he had been attacked hereabouts by two great eagles, and had had great difficulty in defending himself successfully with a stick.

Skirting one lonely farmhouse with some cultivated patches



MAS IN THE CAMARGUE.

beside it, we come to the great wind-swept étang of Vaccarès, by whose shore the tamaris shrubs are bending to the mistral. There, sheltering ourselves as best we may beneath the bushes, we unharness the old white horse, and, having seen him happy over his hay, we lunch, in the shadow of the cart, amid a pleasant and unbroken solitude.

The Roman sleeps, the white horse sucks in long draughts from his pail, the little lion-dog roams ; I lie between the wheels—the sun is high—and write as fast as the flies will allow me. When the Roman awakes, stretching himself, I suggest a walk along Vaccarès. We set out, the shells crunching under our feet. My companion, more talkative than he was before

lunch, tells me of the strange fishing he has had in these waters—how, sometimes, in the winter, when the cold is bitter and the mistral is booming over the shallow étang, the fish are driven ashore, and can be picked up in hundreds by any waders hardy enough to face the gale and the cold.

Then he begins to tell of his life, of his one departure from Provence, when he went to Paris, in 1870, to help his country against the Germans; and how glad he was to return here to Camargue, where he has passed sixty years as gardien, carter, and small landed proprietor—for he has a patch of vines ten kilometres away, towards Arles. He tells me how he likes the life of cities such as Arles, and how he loves to go to its theatre in the lices, and to see played there the *Braçonnier de Vaccarès*, he who pushed down to death in the quicksands the marquis who had seduced his daughter.

He breaks off from his chatter, and points to where, balanced on the crest of a stunted tamaris, by the lake-side, is a large round ball of twigs—a magpie's nest, from which at our approach the mother flies screaming. Before I realise what is happening, the Roman—very Roman now—has his great hand in the nest, and is throwing upon the ground the fluffy, fledged young birds now almost ready to enter upon a life that they are fated at once to leave. I protest against the slaughter; but the farmer within the man is obdurate.

“Les sales bêtes,” he says; “at sowing time they eat all the seed and scratch the place about almost like hens.” The miniature lion-dog, with his head on one side, and his little brown ears cocked, stands among the bodies, looking down upon them with an almost ludicrous solemnity. Then, soberly, as though he, too, in his little canine spirit, were pondering, as I am, the insoluble mystery that shrouds the living and the dead, he follows us back to the cart. “From battle and from murder and from sudden death . . .”

The Roman, who has been an amateur in his day, and has cockades to his credit, is anxious to see something of the courses

de taureaux at Les Saintes this afternoon, and I am eager for a swim in the Mediterranean before the sun goes down; so we pack up our traps, harness the horse, and trundle off again by the comparatively civilised shores of the Vaccarès towards Les Saintes.

I am quite sorry to think that I am leaving, perhaps for the last time, this strange wilderness, whose fascination I have, from the first, felt strongly. I should like to return here at other seasons of the year, to roam, on horseback, over this land, to see more of its glorious sunsets, its summer mirages, its great serpents, its flamingoes, and its bulls. There are many life-long residents of Arles, even, who have seen none of these things.

As we rattle along, golden dragon-flies flit by on gauzy wings, rabbits dart from our path, and coveys of partridges break away from beneath the wheels. In the more sheltered spots, buttercups and daisies dance in the wind. We pass two flocks of sheep and three rough shepherds, who give us the good-day from the shade of the tamaris bushes. One of them wears, by way of sunshade, a sack over his head, and has wooden sabots strapped to bare feet.

"How much would he earn?" I ask.

"Four hundred and fifty francs a year, and his keep; et je ne suis pas jaloux de ce métier là."

'Tis a mystery to me that my man is always certain of his way in this trackless waste. He never hesitates for a moment. The gardiens and the farmers of the Camargue become as skilful, almost, as the American Indians are at tracking men, and at picking out safe routes through a labyrinth of marshes, whose area of danger increases or diminishes with every day. They will avoid a swamp by detecting and following the tracks that the beasts have made round it; and tales are told in Les Saintes of gardiens who have pieced together the whole history of a hunter's day from trampled grasses, a footprint, a feather, and a cartridge case.

Late in the afternoon—yet not too late for my Roman to get a glimpse of his bulls—after we have drunk un petit verre together in the Inn, I find myself back in my room. At the door I meet my landlord and acquaint him with my intention to go a-swimming. He throws up his hands.

“Swimming! No, no, monsieur,—vous allez vous faire du mal.”

“Not at all—the water must be quite warm with all this sun on it.”

“Well, Monsieur, go if you must; but I would not bathe to-day—no, not for five hundred francs.” And with a shake of the head over “these English,” he wandered off down the street, leaving me to my tramp along the shore.

The mistral was still blowing so strongly that I had to anchor all my clothes with stones; but, that accomplished, I had a long swim, undisturbed except by occasional jelly-fish; and it was not until I was too tired to do more than paddle ashore, floating upon my back, that I came to land.

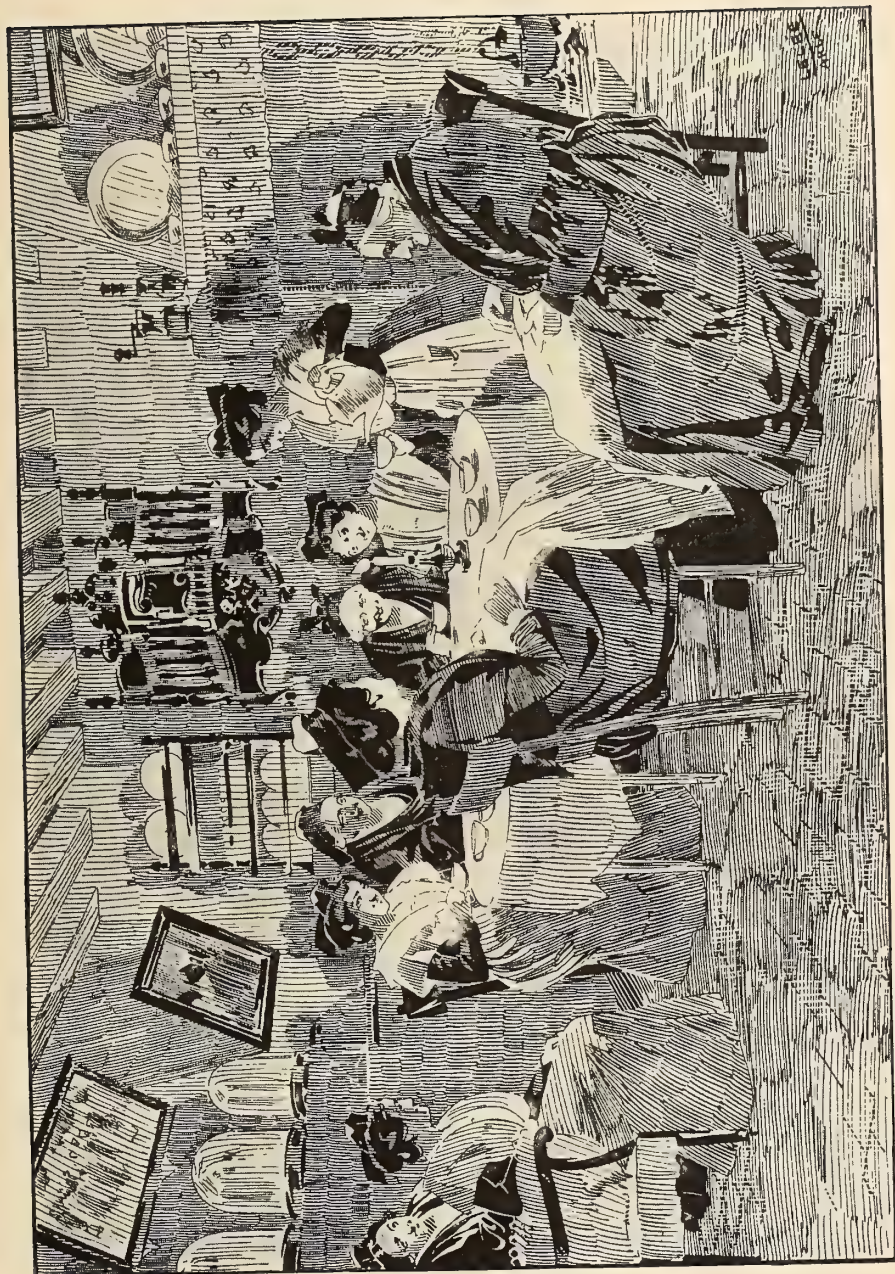
“Land the solid and safe,
To welcome again (confess!)
When high and dry, we chafe
The body, and don the dress.

Does she look, pity, wonder
At one who mimics flight,
Swims—heaven above, sea under,
Yet always earth in sight?”

Wandering this evening down the village street towards the sea, the liquid notes of a tenor voice, floating from the café, pleased my ear. I entered, to find a group of peasants gathered round a little wandering jongleur, who was singing, to the accompaniment of his guitar, the last verse of a ballad that was unknown to me. Loud applause; Bravo! Encore!

With half a smile the singer looked round upon the group.

“What song would you like, Messieurs?”



L. E. 1886

SAINT MARTIN'S EVE.

To face page 296.

"Magali, Magali," cry many of them; and others join in, "Yes, yes, Magali; give us Magali."

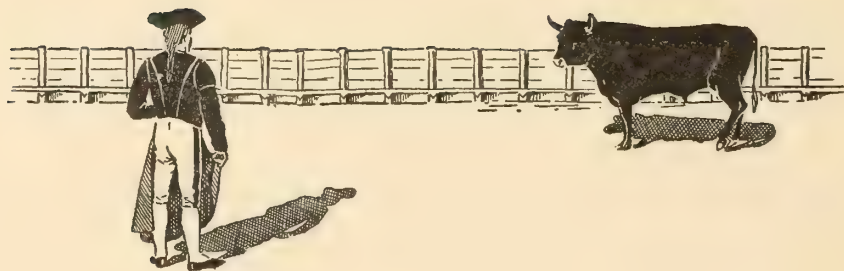
The ballad-monger, sweeping his hand across the strings, began to sing; and even the noisy Provençals sat silent, listening. I, too, heard him with a pleasure that, out of all proportion as it was to the merits of the song or of the singer, had its origin, doubtless, in the knowledge—perhaps sub-conscious—that in these closing hours of many wherein I had learned to care for this wind-swept, wave-washed little corner of the earth, this was one in which—as happens sometimes with us mysterious children of men—a passionate harmony, coming, almost by chance, into our lives, casts upon us its magical spell, and, in one happy moment of conscious realisation, sets free the accumulated emotions of many days.

Perhaps that is why, when my thoughts turn, as they do very often, to Provence, finding myself once more in that strange little village by the sea, I enter again that café, where, in the smoke-laden air, the light falls upon the swarthy faces of the rough fishermen grouped around a little singer whose hand is flinging melody from his guitar; until, as his dreamy eyes look out beyond the dirty walls, the liquid notes, that have almost a sob in them, die away for the last time into the refrain of Ma-ga-li.

Leaving the café, and walking towards music and murmur that the wind brings from the *place* by the church, I find it bright with flaring lamps, and busy with movement, as, up to their ankles in dust, the peasants dance to the braying of a band that plays a tum-tum waltz from a platform of planks supported on three tubs, immediately below my bedroom window.

Here I find some friends; and together we sit awhile and watch the whirling couples. That is one of my last impressions of Les Saintes—the naphtha lights flaring upon the little *place* all astir with dancers twirling through a cloud of dust, the band braying from the barrels, the swish of dresses and the scuffle of feet; beside me, faintly visible in the shadow

of the wall, the slim, white form of a young girl talking in melodious French of the Provence she loves; and, above us, pregnant with the mystery of the night, the silent, star-lit sky, from which one great, still planet shines down over the tower of our Lady of the Sea.





NÎMES. THE NYMPHÆUM.

CHAPTER XXIII

NÎMES AND A BULL-FIGHT

IF one may be allowed to extend somewhat the usually accepted geographical limits of Provence, we may say that Nîmes is its great Protestant city. And it is, perhaps, to Protestantism that Nîmes largely owes her great prosperity. But, be that as it may, the town certainly gives one the impression of being—with the exception of Marseilles and Montpellier—the most flourishing city in this part of France. The wide boulevards, the beautifully shaded avenues, the well-kept open spaces, the magnificent garden of the fountain, which, though tending towards the artificial and theatrical—as all work of that period did—is yet imposing and successful in its way; with its rich growth of planes, limes, and chestnuts shading the broad balustraded walks that surround the Roman columns, beneath which generations of lords and ladies bathed themselves away into oblivion. All these tell a tale of success. In the same garden there are trim lawns and flower-beds, marble statues, broad

staircases, terraces set one upon another; all framed in an amphitheatre of fir-clad hills, where the green boughs wave in the wind. There sunlight shines upon the white dresses of the nursemaids, and upon the happy, daintily-clad children playing diabolos under the trees. Only prosperous places produce such sights as these.

Yet, despite all these flourishing modernities — gardens, waters, and swans; broad boulevards, trams, theatres, and cafés — Nîmes remains a very Roman city. This grey ruin in which the doves are building is the Nymphæum or temple to the Nymphs of the Fountain that still flows between the old Roman columns. Away, up there, hidden among the fir trees, is the Roman Tower Magne, and in the heart of the city are the Amphitheatre and the Temple to Diana; then, too, there are the Roman gates, and, not many miles away, the great aqueduct over the valley of the Gard. But, all these monuments notwithstanding, it is not easy, from so large and modern a city as this, to fashion again in one's mind, as one can elsewhere, the Roman city from which all this sprang. The monuments are scattered, and there are large spaces to fill up; whereas at Arles, for example, you have a much smaller, more compact and less modern material to deal with; moreover, you have the classic women, and a more lively local tradition.

The pleasantest of the Roman monuments at Nîmes is the Temple to Diana, familiarly known to the Nîmois, and now to the world beyond, as the Maison Carrée. It is a most graceful little example of Greek Corinthian architecture, well-proportioned, harmonious in design, and charmingly soft and golden in colour. The sculpture of the capitals and frieze is of great beauty. The inscription below the pediment has vanished, but the holes are still visible into which were driven the plugs that fastened it. From these the inscription itself has been ingeniously conjectured.

After many vicissitudes of fortune—at one time it was used as a stable—the temple now serves the very appropriate

purpose of a museum, and though, far behind Arles in the number and beauty of its treasures, contains some very interesting work. The majority of the statuary is Roman; and one has only to take a glance at the copy of the head of the Venus of Arles in the corner, to realise how little the Roman work will bear comparison with the Hellenic.

But if Roman sculpture lacked the ideal beauty of the Greek, they at least knew how to portray individuality and character. I like much the frank and pathetic face of young Julia Mamæa, the ill-fated mother of Servius Alexander; I like, too, the Julia Domna, wife of Septimus Severus, whose features reveal kindness and intellect beneath the stern dignity of the Roman matron. I suppose that both these heads were done under Greek influence. Among the attractive works are a fine bust of Augustus, two beautiful torsos in white marble, an infant Hercules crushing a serpent, a graceful Greek dancer, a majestic head of Cybele, and a delightfully humorous little Hercules upon the knee of Bacchus.

This arena, in which, to-morrow, I am to see the great bull-fight of the year, is, in general principle, very similar to its neighbour at Arles; but it is in better condition, and has been more restored. One notices at once certain differences in detail. For example, the podium is much lower, and there are no barred holes pierced in it as there are at Arles; from which I conclude that fights between wild beasts were not held here. The concierge tells me that the proximity of the two arenas obliged the management to vary the programme; and that, consequently, at Nîmes, aquatic sports were offered instead of fights with beasts. They gave horse races, chariot races, and gladiatorial exhibitions in addition.

Other differences in detail are noticeable in the buildings. The floor of the upper corridor is here sustained by a vault, whereas at Arles it is constructed of flagstones supported upon ornamented corbels. Externally one notices the same barrell-

ing of the elevation. A cornice runs round the building, and there are corbels to hold the poles that supported the awning.

While I was wandering about this arena, trying to picture to myself the scenes that it had witnessed two thousand years ago, and the scene that it was to witness to-morrow, I saw approaching me, from the great entrance, two Frenchmen; one tall and stout, the other short and thin. They came straight up to me—I may say that I was very bronzed by the suns and winds of the Camargue, and that I wore a broad-brimmed straw hat.

Quoth the fat Frenchman—

“Monsieur est picador?”

“Non, Monsieur, je suis un voyageur sentimental.”

“Oh, but you look quite Spanish; and I do *so* like talking to picadors and matadors.”

“I am desolated, Monsieur, to have raised your hopes in vain. All I can do, by way of making amends, is to advise you to call at the Hôtel du Luxembourg. There you will find Bombita, the famous Spanish matador, who is lunching with the Prince de C——. A chat with him may compensate you for this disappointment.”

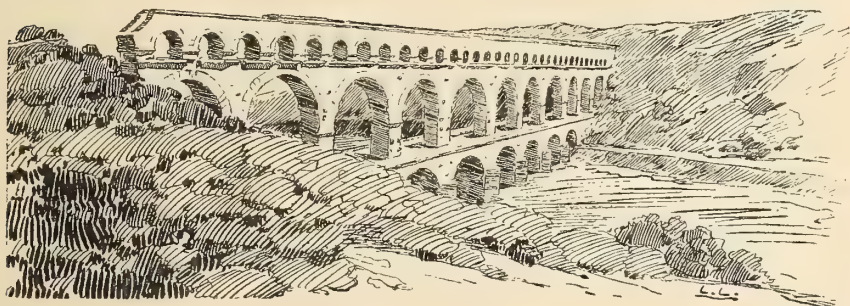
“Thank you, Monsieur—I begin to think that you are English.” With an assurance that he was right this time, I left the Frenchmen to their picador hunt. Subsequently I repeated the incident to a lady at the hotel. She smiled and said—

“Si vous êtes espagnol, eh bien, moi je suis espagnolle aussi.” Which makes it all the more wonderful.

The Pont du Gard, this great aqueduct that the Romans built to bring water to thirsty Nîmes, is certainly one of the most impressive monuments of France. The feeling of awe with which one looks upon it arises not only from the majesty and grandeur of its stride from hill to hill, but also from the utter loneliness of its position, and the suddenness with which, at a bend of the road, one comes upon it hidden in the trees.

There is no Greek influence here—only just an unsparing, unflinching Roman effort. Looking upon it you seem to hear a strong man say; “Nîmes needs water; Nîmes shall have it.” She had it for many years; for so many years, that here, where I am standing, in the channel where the water flowed, the lime is crusted a foot thick over the Roman cement with which the naked stones were lined. A thin, dark crevice shows between the two layers.

But for the song of the birds, the valley is utterly silent. The Gard that, when last I saw it in the autumn rains, was a great river roaring on its way, over rocks and flooded meadows



THE PONT DU GARD.

that were strewn with débris and fallen trees, is now a stream quietly meandering through its bordering woods between the lonely hills of silver and green. I look down from a dizzy height upon the ripples and reflections below me, and away to where the valley opens out to meet a circling chain of hills crowned by a grey village. In the far distance a stream of light falls upon the ghostly summit of Ventoux. I plunge into the darkness of the deserted aqueduct, and so down to the river again.

In the hall of the hotel I meet the proprietress bearing a great bouquet of orange and red flowers tied with ribbons of the same colour, the colours of Spain. It is to adorn the

luncheon table where Bombita, the Spanish matador, is being entertained by a prince who is staying here. The hotel is filling very fast—there is much bustle and talk.

How strong a hold this bull-fighting has upon the Nîmois, is everywhere attested. The buzz of excitement last night in the concert hall when the lantern threw the word "Corrida" upon the sheet, the groups gathered before the posters in the streets, the prominence given to the subject in the local journals—all these are evidences of the interest taken in a form of amusement that may be said to have become almost indigenous, although the locals supply nothing but the arena, the spectators, and the sacrificial horses. So far as I am aware, neither Provence nor Languedoc has ever produced either matador or banderillero; for the reason, I suppose, that these Frenchmen lack, if not the Spanish courage, at least the perseverance, coolness, and self-restraint that go to the making of a successful bull-fighter.

But, be that as it may, never have I seen a Southern city so animated as is Nîmes this Sunday morning. The cafés and the streets are crowded, and every entrance to the amphitheatre is besieged by thousands who are clamouring in vain for tickets. I escape for a while into the quiet garden of the fountain, which is almost deserted, and there watch the doves building among the peaceful eaves of the Nymphæum. On the way back to my hotel, I observe a group of three or four persons leaning over the parapet that borders the stream. They are interested in the fate of a swallow that has somehow fallen into the water; and now, too exhausted to escape, is being swept along by the current. One man tries in vain to rescue it with an umbrella let down to the water by a string. Will he, in an hour's time, be hoarse with shouting while the horses are being ripped up?

Coming down the Boulevard Victor Hugo, I see, silhouetted against the sky, black figures swarming upon the topmost stones of the arènes.

My hotel is crowded with people come from all parts of

Provence and Languedoc; from Marseilles and from Arles; from Toulouse, Béziers, and Narbonne, to see this, the bull-fight of the year. There are some from farther afield—from Paris and Madrid. In the hall are large hats and some painted faces—not artistically done. I make my way through the buzzing streets to the amphitheatre, and, jostling through the crowds that besiege the entrances, I gain my seat. Already the place is crowded, and loud with the buzz of tongues. The bright costumes of the women and girls relieve with pleasing patches of light and colour the dark clothes of the men. Attendants in red shirts and white trousers are passing among the spectators, selling gay Japanese parasols and brightly coloured fans that already are fluttering everywhere. Thin voices repeat monotonously, "*Voyez le souvenir, voyez l'ombrelle, voyez l'éventail!*" There is a loud outburst of applause announcing the advent of the Mayor, of the band, of I know not whom. With every moment the Southern babble increases. I look round upon the wall of faces. Near me five young girls are sitting in a row, all eating sweets, and all talking at once. Their white and pale blue dresses are refreshing amid the heat and clamour. By this time the din is deafening. There is much whistling and hooting, until the music of the orchestra quiets some of the spectators. On my right a fat woman in a fawn-coloured dress babbles unceasingly; but her words are drowned in the general clamour.

The arena is deserted as yet, excepting a few attendants in scarlet and white. Six feet in front of the podium has been erected a wooden barrier some four feet high; close to it, at regular intervals, are other short barriers, just far enough from the main barrier to enable a man hard pressed to slip between them, when he has no time to vault. Opposite to me, beside the great entrance, is the grey door of the cage where the bulls are confined. Above our heads the flags of France are floating in the breeze. The hour has come, the crowd is expectant.

The opening bars of the "*Marseillaise*" crash out from the

orchestra; beneath the great doors horses' feet can be seen moving. The doors swing open, revealing two horsemen motionless in the gloom of the archway. They come forward, side by side, and trot, amid loud applause, into the centre of the arena—two dark, blue-cloaked figures in plumed hats. They open out left and right, and, keeping abreast of one another, make the tour of the arena, and disappear whence they came. In the gloom of the archway I can see moving figures and the glint of gold.

The leaders of the procession file out; a great cheer rises as the three matadors, in knee-breeches, all splendid in coloured satin and gold, emerge from the shadow into the flashing sunlight, to the crashing beat of the Toreador march in *Carmen*. At their head, in a costume of violet and gold, is young Bombita with the eternal smile—reputed to be one of the most graceful matadors of Spain; not, perhaps, as skilful as others are at the estocade, or death-stroke, but great in play with the bulls, a finished artist at his work. Following the matadors come their cuadrillas, also in brave array; banderilleros with their crimson cloaks, alguazils, puntilleros; then the picadores mounted on sorry horses that are breastplated in leather, and blindfolded of one eye, lest they should see the horned death too clearly. The picadores wear scarlet coats, and have their legs heavily bandaged. They are armed with the long piques with which they are to rouse the bull. The procession is closed by the train of gaily caparisoned mules drawing the hooks with which the dead bodies are to be removed from the arena.

The procession breaks up; the mules are turned and disappear—this time without a burden. Some of the banderilleros with their flying capes flit over the podium, others remain in the arena, strolling about with the utmost sang-froid; the picadores, for whose horses one's heart is already wrung, take up positions at intervals close to the barrier. A trumpet sounds. A man in a red shirt opens the little door, and a

heavily built grey bull enters the arena at a fast trot. Seeing an individual in crimson velvet strolling casually across the sanded floor, he lowers the great armed head and makes for his man.

For a moment I fear for the toreador. I might as wisely have feared for myself. As the animal draws near, he spreads before its line of vision the red cape that no bull can resist; then, at the moment when the horns are upon him, with a deft movement of body and arms, he withdraws himself and cape out of danger, and the bull, never swerving from the direct line of the charge, passes him harmlessly, and slows down to look for something else that he can kill. Ah! there, against the barrier, is a brown horse with a picador on its back. The bull paws the ground angrily, backing a pace as he does so, then down goes the head again. The picador turns his trembling mount towards the animal, and lowers his pique. The grey beast charges, receives the pique between the horns with a dull smack which stops him for a moment, then comes again, and now is right beneath the horse. There is a wrenching movement of the great head; the fore part of the horse is lifted on the terrible horns, the picador falls backwards over the barrier. But round the bull the red capes are flitting and fluttering, to distract his attention; and, turning from his first victim, he charges furiously at the nearest cape, then at the next, and the next, that vanish like will o' the wisps, just as his horns take them. The bull stops for a breather, making occasional angry movements of the tail, and pawing the sand with his right fore-foot. He eyes wickedly the men with the capes, as they hover about him, luring him on. But he makes no further charge.

"Pica! Pica!" shout the spectators. Another picador coaxes his horse towards the bull, until the trembling white creature is facing the fierce grey one. 'Tis a good charge this time. Down comes the poor white thing, sending the picador crashing to the ground. He rolls over and over to get clear of the animals; then, guarded by a flutter of red, rises and, unharmed,

makes for the barrier. The bull is drawn away to the centre of the ring. The puntillero, with a dagger-stroke, ends the struggles of the disembowelled horses. Sacks are thrown over the bodies. Already the arena is dabbled with blood.

The bull is tiring, and the turn of the banderilleros has come. Thirty yards in front of the taureau a man is standing, motionless and erect, holding high above his head, with outstretched arms, two darts (banderillos), each, apparently, two to three feet long, and ornamented with what appear to be ribbons. The bull stands quite still eyeing him, fascinated by the strangeness of the attitude. Suddenly, with a springing movement, the banderillero runs straight for the bull, then, just as he is upon the very points of the horns, swerves swiftly to the left, and in the act deftly plants his darts one on each side of the bull's neck. Loud applause from men and music—the band always strikes up in recognition of skilful work.

The grey bull, enraged at the indignity, and feeling the smart of the darts, shakes his neck and shoulders angrily, and charges a red cloak; but now the green and gold man with the darts is before him again, in that strangely fascinating attitude; and again, amid another burst of applause, a pair of banderillos are quivering in the brute's neck. Again he charges, again he tries in vain to shake them off. Now the grey shoulders are dark red and shining; the poor brute shows signs of exhaustion, of fear even. He wanders off to the body of a horse that is lying upon the sand, sniffs at it, walks over it, lingers round it, as though he had learned at last to sympathise with the victim he is so soon to follow.

It is time to end all this. The slim form of Bombita, in grey and gold, enters the ring, smiling always. He makes his obeissance to the President, and the oath—too often broken—that he will slay or be slain by the bull; then advances towards his opponent, holding low in his right hand the sword upon the concealed blade of which hangs the scarlet muleta that no bull can see and not hate. The great moment has come, the crowd

is tense with excitement. Bombita advances towards the animal, who, seeing a new enemy approaching with a scarlet horror, forgets the horse, forgets his weariness, and charges. Then begins a sight that, were it not for the horror and cruelty of it all, would be a very pretty one. Again and again the bull, gathering his last strength, charges the matador. Again and again, as coolly and gracefully as though he were receiving a gentle guest in his own drawing-room, the matador, smiling always, turning sideways to his opponent, and bending his slim body slightly forward over the muleta, which he holds at short arm's length just before him, receives the animal's charge, and with a lithe movement allows the deadly horns to pass him so closely by that I can see no daylight between the horn-tip and the man's ribs. Once the matador shakes his hand and looks down at it. I think that his thumb is bleeding.

Now the bull, tired out, and beginning to despair of harming this enchanted man, stands motionless regarding the matador, who, smiling no more, advances to within arm's length of the animal's head, and there stands, still as a statue, gazing deep into its eyes. So the two mortal enemies face each other at close quarters. At that instant the matador, consciously or unconsciously, is endeavouring to exert hypnotic influence upon his victim, and the bull sees his adversary growing, growing before his eyes, until he is facing not a man but a giant. This is the psychological moment. Neither man nor beast stirs; then slowly, very slowly, amid a great silence, I see the sword arm of the matador rising until he is sighting along the blade that is pointed horizontally over the bull's head, between the horns, in a straight line with the vertebral column. For a second the blade is held so; then it flashes in the sun, and, darting like lightning, is plunged up to the hilt, deep in the bull's neck and heart. For a second or two the beast stands motionless; there is a gush of blood from its mouth. It falls upon its side, dead. The matador stands looking down upon the body.

From the crowd a mighty roar: "Vive Bombita! vive

Bombita!" Hats are flung into the air; there is a rain into the arena—of hats, sticks, and flowers, objects of all sorts. The band crashes out triumphal music. The matador, calm and smiling as ever, makes his tour, saluting the crowd. He is followed by his cuadrillas, who pick up and return to their owners the hats that are still pouring on to the sand. An attendant cuts off and presents to him the right ear of the bull, the symbol of victory. He takes it, then throws it to the crowd. The train of mules in their scarlet trappings comes trotting into the arena; the dead bodies of the bull and his victims are dragged off one by one. On their way back a great pool of blood is across their path. The mules swerve suddenly and will not cross it.

I look round over it all—upon the arena strewn with bodies of torn horses, and red with little lakes of blood; as I do so a great horror thrills me. For a moment the place reels and lurches before my eyes; I hate it all; I hate these people, I hate myself for being here. But now that I am here, I will see it through; and to distract my attention from the black-and-white bull that is already in the ring, charging furiously at Bombita and his muleta, to the accompaniment of a tempest of applause, I begin to talk with my left-hand neighbour, a young and quite quiet Frenchman. I ask him how the spectators excuse to themselves the horror and cruelty of it all. He smiles.

"Je vois bien que Monsieur n'a pas les habitudes méridionales."

I reply that I am an English traveller brought here by curiosity only.

"Well, Monsieur," he says, "it is like this. We admit that the sport is cruel, especially to the horses; but you must remember that they are old horses who have already lived. We buy them from the knackers at thirty francs a time, and so rob them of, perhaps, only one day of life at most. Then as regards the bulls; it is perhaps cruel to slay them, but when

we see them so keen to slay all that they can, we, too, though we sympathise with them in a way, are seized with a desire to see them die. Also they have a run for their money. And then you have, in favour of the sport, the magnificent skill and courage of the bull-fighters, who run such great risks so bravely, and are not seldom injured or slain. But I agree with you that that is horrible"—and he pointed to a horse that, after walking stiffly for a few steps, fell in its death-agony upon the sand, struggling, until the puntillero's dagger ended its life.

"Pica! Pica! Pica!" fierce shouts from the crowd; hooting and yells.

"What does that mean?" I ask.

"It means that the bull has been piqué only three times; and they are demanding a fourth horse. The crowd likes to see as many horses killed as it thinks it has a right to—that is to say four."

The great doors open, and another horse is ridden limping into the arena. The crowd receives it with shouts of disapproval, groans, and hisses.

"'Tis a horse that has already been wounded. They won't have it," says my neighbour. The picador, with an expressive shrug, turns the animal and rides it out; soon reappearing upon a comparatively sound one.

"In the end the management have always to give way to the people's wishes," says my neighbour, "otherwise there is trouble. It is not so long ago that a bull-fight was given, in this very arena, at which six bulls were advertised to be fought. Well, by some misadventure, probably an injury to the spine, a picador managed to kill the bull at the first charge. The crowd took no particular notice until the end of the entertainment, when they began to clamour for another animal.

"We have killed all the bulls, as advertised," said the management.

"No, you have not," said the crowd; "the first bull was not played with and doesn't count."

"We have no more bulls," said the management.

"You must get another," said the crowd.

"It cannot be done," said the management.

"Then things will happen," said the crowd.

"Then they must happen," said the management.

They did. The crowd proceeded to tear down from the arena every seat and other movable thing it could lay its hands on, to pile them all in the centre of the ring, and then to set fire to the heap. The management was helpless; the police, after endeavouring vainly to resist, were infected by the public enthusiasm, and joined the rioters. In a few minutes several thousand pounds' worth of damage was done.

"You are a wild lot, you Southerners," I remarked.

"They were quite justified," said my neighbour. "If you, in London, went to a five-act play, and the management gave you only four acts, would you not break up the theatre? Of course you would. Let us stop talking. Here is Pastor."

Pastor is facing the black-and-white bull for the final coup. He is less graceful than Bombita at playing the beast, but his courage is dauntless, and he has the reputation of being great at the estocade. The sword is poised, the right arm drawn back and the stroke bravely given. But I see that the blade, though buried almost to the hilt in the animal's body, is slightly to one side, and has not severed the vertebral column. The bull staggers a few yards towards the body of a dead horse, drops on his knees, then slowly falls over upon his side, dead.

Some bravos, but no tumultuous applause; no hats or sticks in the arena. A matador is allowed two strokes in which to kill; but the estocade must be a perfectly straight thrust in a dead line with the animal's vertebral column. Otherwise he will not die instantly. There is no enthusiasm for a mere "coup de sabre."

More bulls are slain, some skilfully and some clumsily. They have all been fine animals, and have fought bravely for their lives. Now the last is to come.

The little door of the cage opens, and there emerges, slowly

and deliberately, a great, heavily built, dark grey bull, with a magnificent black head and shoulders. He advances some ten yards into the ring, then stops and looks about him with an air of considerable boredom. Then he turns and endeavours to re-enter the cage. But the little red-shirted man who had opened the door, has shut it again, and the bull shows his disgust by a protesting kick against the barrier. Again he advances into the ring, looking about as unconcernedly as before, taking not the slightest interest in this last act of his life's drama. A second time he turns back to his cage, only to be disappointed.

"A lazy one, this," I say to myself; and I hear my neighbour, too, muttering, "*Un paresseux, celui-là.*" Yet there is strength in every line of the brute. The *paresseux* is advancing again deliberately towards the centre of the arena, but is beginning now to eye curiously the many brightly dressed figures who are waving before him those objectionable red capes. But he does not notice them for long. His eye is attracted by a brown horse, on which a red picador is mounted, standing up against the barrier.

Instantly the great black head drops, and, throwing off all lethargy, he charges like a thunderbolt. Heedless of the pique, he takes the doomed animal just in front of the hind legs, and lifts it upon the terrible horns. Over the barrier falls the picador, heavily thrown. With one mighty wrench the bull slits the horse from end to end. Its entrails fall in a purple heap upon the ground; with scarcely a quiver the beast drops dead. Heedless of the cloud of red cloaks fluttering round him, the bull, now madly furious, charges another animal, and taking it, this time, upon the side, rolls it headlong in the sand, while the picador, flung to earth, and spinning over and over for safety, at last scrambles, in a dazed condition, to his feet, and clambers over the barrier.

Another horse is torn—the bull is mad. In less time, almost, than I can write it, six horses are lying dead and two more are wounded. The crowd is wild with joy.

"Vive le taureau ! vive le taureau !"

Then "Pica ! Pica !" for scarcely has a picador been able to touch him. A lame horse is brought on. Hooting and whistling enough to deafen. It is removed, and replaced by a sound victim who is promptly slain.

It is the turn of the banderillero. But there are limits even to the nerve power of a bull-fighter, and, moreover, the beast will not keep still, but moves his head and shoulders at the psychological moment, so that the banderillos are planted ludicrously to one side. There is ironical applause, and more "Vive le taureau !" Put on his mettle by the derision, the banderillero makes another attempt, and this time, at great risk to himself, gets the two darts well placed. The band and the frantic crowd applaud vehemently.

Now six banderillos are quivering in the bull's shoulders, but the brute is still charging, and though the time has come for the entry of the matador, he delays. None envy him the task ; but at last Mazzantinito steps into the arena amid an impressive silence, and the capes withdraw to a short distance. The bull eyes his new adversary sullenly, makes one restless movement of head and shoulders, paws the ground, lowers the great black head, and charges ; then again, and again. Twice I think that the matador is wounded ; but still he attempts no stroke. The beast will not keep still for one moment, but is always moving, shifting his ground, turning here and there. His movements are so swift and unexpected that one of the cloak men is almost caught ; but he manages to vault the barrier, leaving his cape behind him. The bull gores it, kicks at it, and is then again lured away towards the centre of the ring. There he pauses for a moment, and the matador, now growing impatient, attempts an estocade.

Utter failure: the beast raises his head at the critical moment ; the blade penetrates only a few inches, and remains hanging in the wound, the animal making furious endeavours to shake it out. The weapon falls to the ground, and the matador, receiving it again, attempts the stroke, and again fails. This time the

sword remains in the wound, and is drawn out by an attendant who manages to throw a cape over it from one side. The crowd hiss and hoot, and applaud the bull. A third stroke fails; a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and a seventh.

The animal, now streaming with blood, and standing at bay in a great red pool, is pawing the ground, twisting, turning all ways towards the group of tormentors that hover about him. The matador, after each failure—in theory no matador is allowed more than two strokes—turns towards the hooting spectators with deprecating, apologetic gestures, as who should say, "What can a man do with such a beast as this?" But suddenly, when, after the ninth stroke, I am beginning to think that the fight will last for ever, the beast sinks upon his forelegs, and I know that the end is near. A red flag waved before him brings him up again; but only for a second. Blood is streaming from his mouth; again he kneels. The matador stands passively, looking on—for no matador may touch a fallen beast. The little puntillero creeps up from behind. The dagger hovers for a moment over the dripping red neck, then falls. The splendid, warrior bull turns on his side, his limbs stiffening into death.

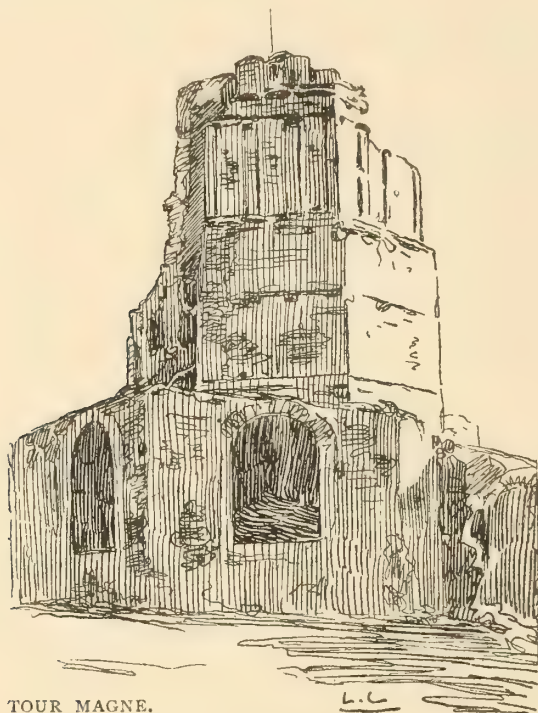
"If that bull had been a man!" said my neighbour.

The crowd swarm from their places. As for me, I went home and washed the blood from my hands and face.

The scenes that I had witnessed had aroused in me strangely mingled sensations. I felt that I ought to be feeling nothing but horror for what I had seen; and yet, though a part of me was grieved and sickened, I had to admit that the valour and skill of the men, from the matadors downwards, and the blindly courageous fighting of the bulls had aroused in me a measure of admiration. Certainly all my heart had gone out in sympathy with that terrible and victorious animal, who, to the last drop of his blood, had never turned his black head from his enemies, and had won from a Southern crowd the applause that, hardened though they are, they never grudge to the courage of a dauntless bull.

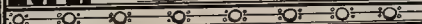
But deeper down, within me, I knew that the spectacle was an utter barbarity; that it is not well with a nation that does such things: and I thought of the words of Wordsworth—and of a greater than Wordsworth—that we should not base our pleasure upon the suffering of the meanest thing that feels. I have seen my last bull-fight.

Returning that night to Paris, I put from me what I had seen during the day; and as we rushed northwards over the fields of France, there flowed into my mind other and more gracious memories of Provence.



TOUR MAGNE.

A stylized illustration of a landscape. In the background, there are rolling hills or mountains under a sky with radiating lines, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. In the foreground, there is a body of water with some small, dark shapes that could be rocks or small boats. On the left and right sides, there are tall, thin, dark shapes that look like trees or cypresses. The overall style is simple and graphic, using black lines and solid colors.



INDEX

Abbé Faria, 94.
 Aigues-Mortes, 124-132, 257.
 Approach to, 127.
 Chapel of St. Louis, 131.
 Dangers of, 126.
 Ramparts, the, 128.
 St. Louis at, 129, 130.
 Tour de Constance, 130.
 Aimargues, 124.
 Aix, 108, 120, 123.
 Cathedral, 98.
 Cloches de Corneville, 100, 101.
 Interior, 99.
 King René's *Book of Hours*, 102.
 Music Hall, 100, 101.
 Road to, from Orange, 97.
 Tapestries, 98.
 Alba, the, 161.
 Albigeois, Crusades against, 48, 99, 137, 138.
 Albion, 72.
 Aliscamps, Arles, 231-235.
 Alpines, the, 69, 72, 111.
 Amphitheatre at Arles (see Arles).
 at Nîmes (see Nîmes).
 Arc, River, 105.
 Archbishop of Pennart, 98.
 Arène, Paul, 208, 248.
 Arles, 67, 103, 110, 113, 114, 116, 120, 124, 204-255.
 Aliscamps, the, 231, 235.
 Amphitheatre, the, 210-217.
 Amphitheatre, condition of, in seventeenth century, 213, 214.
 Arlésiennes, Characteristics of, 242-244.
 Attractive Corners, 252.
 Bona Dea, Temple of, 217.
 Bull-Fight in Amphitheatre, 214, 216.
 Capitaines de Marine, 222, 223.
 Circus, Roman, 235.

Arles—*continued*.

Cloisters of St. Trophimus, 239, 240.
 Fair in the Lices, 226-230.
 Forum, Place du, 235.
 Forum, Hotel du, 218.
 Greek or Roman?, 204, 205.
 Hauteur, the, 222.
 Homme de Bronze, 217.
 Hôtel du Forum, 218.
 Hôtel du Nord, 180, 181, 218.
 Hôtel de Ville, 217.
 Lices, Church Parade in, 242.
 Lices, Fair in, 226-230.
 Major, Eglise de la, 217.
 Musée, Réattu, 218, 220.
 Palais de Justice, 235.
 Place du Forum, or
 Place des Hommes, 218, 221, 235.
 Place de la République, 236.
 Procession of Communicants, 240-242.
 Roquette, La, 222.
 Rue des Matelots, 222.
 Rue des Pilotés, 222.
 Saracen Towers, 224.
 Silk-worms, 252, 254.
 St. Honorat, Church of, 231.
 St. Trophimus, Cathedral of, 209, 237-242, 255.
 Theatre, Græco-Roman, 217, 218, 224, 225.
 Aubade, the, 161.
 Aucassin and Nicolette, 40-47, 161.
 Augustus, Emperor, 10, 246, 301.
 Avignon, 146-149, 153-158.
 Legend of the Martyr, 154.
 Notre Dame des Doms, Cathedral, 156, 158.
 Palace of the Popes, 156.
 Rocher des Doms, 148.
 The Rhône at, 146.

- Avilar, Shepherd of, 149.
 Avon, the, 89.
 Azalais, 160.

 Bacalaria, M. de la, 162.
 Bacchus, Infant, 301.
 Banderilleros, 308, 314.
 Barral des Baux, 160.
 Barrès, Maurice, 127, 131, 234, 248, 258.
 Barthelasse, Isle of, 149.
 Bastille of the Midi, 94.
 Beaucaire, Castle of, 40, 209.
 Siege of, 48-51.
 The Fair, 40, 47.
 Beaucet, St. Gens, 186, 187, 192, 197.
 Bed of St. Gens (see St. Gens).
 Beethoven, 82.
 Belgion, 72.
 Benedict XII., Pope, 158.
 Bénézet (see St. Bénézet).
 Bérénice, Jardin de, 127.
 Bertrand de Born, 160.
 Bohémiens, 121, 267, 272, 275.
 Bombita (matador), 302, 304, 306, 308,
 309, 310.
 Bona Dea, Altar of, 247.
 Temple of, 217.
 Bonpas, 154.
 Braconnier de Vaccarès, 294.
 Bridge Builders, 153.
 Bridge of Bonpas, 154.
 Buffalo Bill, 32-34.
 Bull, Legend of the (see Legends).
 Bulls, Driving, 261-264.
 Bulls, Entry to Les Saintes, 281, 282.
 Provençal Bull-Fight, 283-289.
 Spanish Bull-Fight, 304-316.
 Swimming the Rhône, 280.
 Burns, Robert, 113.
 Byzantine Architecture, 90.

 Cabassole, Philippe de, 170.
 Camargue, 116-118, 120, 124, 261-264,
 290-295.
 American Prairies, similarity to, 261.
 Characteristics of, 116-118, 290-295.
 Derivation of name, 116.
 Drive to the Vaccarès, 290-295.
 La Trille (Bull-Driving), 261-264.
 Shepherds of, 228, 295.
 White Horses of, 262.
 Canzo, the, 161.
 Capitaines de Marine, 222, 223.

 Carcassonne, 128, 133-143.
 Chénier, André, 141.
 Embracement, the, 140.
 History of, 138.
 Picture Gallery, 140, 141.
 Siege, A, 133, 134.
 St. Nazaire, Cathedral, 136.
 Wedding Party, 142.
 Carmen, Toreador March, 306.
 Carpentras, Road to, 6.
 Palais de Justice, 10.
 Plane Trees, 10.
 Porte d'Orange, 8.
 Promenade, the, 8.
 Roman Triumphal Arch, 8-10.
 Carrière, La, Arles, 217.
 Catalans, 94.
 Catherine of Siena, 156.
 Caumont, 168.
 Cavaillon, 15-22.
 Cathedral of St. Véran, 17.
 Child's Funeral, 17, 18.
 Cloisters, 18, 21.
 Conscript, 17.
 Hermitage of St. Jacques, 21.
 Road to St. Rémy, 21.
 Roman Triumphal Monument, 21.
 Charles d'Orléans, 162.
 Charles Martel, 155.
 Château d'If, 93.
 Château du Pharo, 94.
 Château Renard, 168, 182.
 Chénier, André, 141.
 Chèvre d'Or, the, 207, 210.
 Child's Funeral, 17, 18.
 Christ, Early representations of, 231.
 Circus, Roman, at Arles, 182-184.
 Clement VI., Pope, 156, 165.
 Cloches de Corneville, 100, 101.
 Cody, Colonel, "Buffalo Bill," 33-34.
 Collegium Pontificum, 153.
 Conscript, 17.
 Constantine, Emperor, 221.
 Cordes, 206-208.
 Corneille, 114.
 Courtesan, Roman, 212.
 Crau, Le, 61, 72, 74, 76, 110, 209.
 Crime Cross, the, 74.
 Cross of Meeting (see St. Gens).
 Cypress, 4.

 Damozel, the Blessed, 139.
 Dancing Girls, 247.

Dante, 160, 231.
 Dantès, Edmond, 94.
 Daudet, Alphonse, 23, 52, 69, 70, 71,
 155.
 De Born, Bertrand, 160.
 De Manville, Family and Palace of, 63.
 De Montfort (see Simon).
 De Vidal, Pierre, 160.
 D'Orléans, Charles, 162.
 Dumas, Alexandre, 127, 155.

Edmond Dantès, 94.
 Edward, the Black Prince, 138.
 Embracement, the, 140.
 Entressen, 76.
 Esterelle, 10-12.
 Estocade, 306, 309, 312, 314, 315.
 Etang de Berre, 78, 79, 83, 88.

Faidit, Gaucelon, 162.
 Fair of Beaucaire (see Beaucaire).
 Félibres, 158.
 Ferrières, 78.
 Figueira, Guillem, 161.
 Flamingoes, 264, 290-292.
 Florentine, 68.
 Folquet, Bishop of Toulouse, 161.
 Fontvieille, 70, 114, 209.
 Fort St. André, 164.
 Forum, Hôtel de, 218.
 Place du, 218, 221, 235.
 Fos, Gulf of, 80.
 Franchihot, 112.
 Francis I., 94.
 François Villon, 162.

Gard, Pont du, 302, 303.
 Gaucelon Faidit, 162.
 Gens (see St. Gens).
 Geryon, 72.
 Gipsies (see Bohémiens).
 Gorge d'Enfer, 68.
 Gothic Cathedrals, 212.
 Grau du Roi, 125.
 Guilelma, Viscountess Lady, 161.
 Guillem de Cabestanh, 159.
 Guillem Figueira, 161.

Hannibal, 30.
 Harvesters, Legend of the Three (see
 Legends).
 Hauteur, the, Arles, 222.
 Hercules, 72, 301.

Hermitage of St. Jacques, 21.
 Hippolytus, 250.
 Homer, 113.
 Homme de Bronze, 217.
 Hommes, Place des (see Forum).
 Hôtel d'Europe, Avignon, 147.
 Hôtel du Forum, Arles, 218.
 Hôtel du Nord, Arles, 180, 181, 217.
 Hôtel St. Martin, L'Isle, 169.
 Hôtel de Ville, Arles, 217.
 Hueffer, Francis, 161.

Iberia, 72.
 Innocent VI., Pope, 164, 166.
 Isle, the, 78.
 Italy, 88.

Jaffa, 118.
 Jan Van Eyck, 98.
 Janvier, Thomas, 79, 163.
 Jardin de la Fontaine (see Nîmes).
 Jaufre Rudel, 162.
 Jeanne de Laval, 63, 98.
 John of Burgundy, 138.
 John XXII., Pope, 158.
 Jonquières, 78.
 Julia, 66.
 Julia Domna, 301.
 Julia Mamaea, 301.
 Julius Cæsar, 29.
 Jupiter, 72.

Keats, 69, 137.
 Knights of Malta, 218, 221

Lambert de Limoux,
 La Roquette, 222.
 La Trille, 261-264.
 Laura, 158, 168, 172.
 Lazarus, 66, 118, 119, 120.
 Le Cailor, 124.
 Le Crau (see Crau).
 Leda and the Swan, 250.
 Legends—
 Legend of the Bull, 175, 176.
 Legend of Les Saintes Maries, 118-
 121.
 Legend of St. Gens, 187-192.
 Legend of St. Martha, 52-56.
 Legend of the Three Harvesters, 35-39.
 Lelée, Léopold, 218.
 Les Baux, 60-69, 71, 111, 207.
 The Castle, 61, 62.

- Les Baux—*continued*.
 The City, 62.
 Palace of Les Porcelelets, 63.
 The Rocks, 60.
 Le Thor, Church of, 99, 174, 177, 178.
 Les Martigues, 78-88.
 Crime Cross, the, 79.
 Grande Epicerie, 88.
 Gulf of Fos, 80.
 Magali, Story of, 79.
 Marguerite, 86.
 Notre Dame de la Garde, 79.
 Road to, 72, 76.
 Rosemary, 83.
 Les Porcelelets, Palace of, 63.
 Les Saintes Maries de la Mer, 67, 116-123, 258-277, 278-289, 296-298.
 Bull-Fight, Provençal, 283-289.
 Bulls Swimming the Rhône, 280.
 Châsse, Descent of, 268, 269.
 Châsse, Elevation of, 275.
 Châsse, Reception of, 270.
 Church, the, 121.
 Church, the, Behaviour in, 271.
 Entry of the Bulls, 281, 282.
 Eulogy of the Saints, 271.
 Fêtes, The Civil, 278-289.
 Fêtes, The Religious, 258-277.
 Fêtes, The Religious, First Day, 266, 267.
 Legend of, 118-121.
 Mas, the, 261, 262.
 Mireille, Rehearsal of, 280, 281.
 Plage, the, 259, 260, 264, 272.
 Procession to the Sea, 274.
 Provençals and the Pope, 273.
 Les Thermes, 220, 221.
Lettres de mon Moulin, 69, 70, 155, 243.
 Lices, Fair in the, Arles, 226-230.
 Church Parade in, 242.
 L'Isle sur Sorgue, 15, 17, 168, 169, 202, 203.
 Hôtel St. Martin, 169.
 Road to, from Cavaillon, 15.
 Road to, from Avignon, 168.
 L'Isclou d'Or, 91, 113.
 Loba, 160.
 Louis XI., 165.
 Louis XIV., 131, 165.
 Magali, 296, 297.
 Maguelone, La Belle, 127.
 Maillane, 31.
 Maison Carrée (see Nîmes).
 Marcellus, 246.
 Margarida, 159.
 Marguerite, 86.
 Marguerite Moul, 122.
 Marguerite de Provence, 34.
 Marie Jacobé (see Les Saintes Maries and Legends).
 Marie Salomé (see Les Saintes Maries and Legends).
 Marius, 28, 56, 66, 103, 106.
 Marseilles, 76, 89-96, 105, 120.
 Café of the Midi, 92.
 Catalans, 94.
 Château D'If, 93.
 Château du Pharo, 94.
 Church of Notre Dame de la Garde, 90.
 Church of St. Victor, 90, 94.
 Church of St. Vincent de Paul, 94.
 Martha (see St. Martha).
 Martyr of Avignon, 154.
 Mary Magdalene, 66, 118, 120.
 Mas du Juge, 35.
 Mas in the Camargue, 261, 262.
 Maussane, 67, 72.
 Maximin, 118.
 Mazzantinito (matador), 314.
 Mediterranean, the, 78, 94.
 Memmi, Simone, 156, 158.
 Mill of Daudet, 69, 209.
 Mirabeau, 94.
 Miraculous Fountain, 201.
 Mireille, 68, 181, 254, 278, 280, 281.
 Mistral, Frédéric, 23, 31-35, 68, 158, 172, 180-182, 254.
 Visit to, 31-35.
 Mistral, the, 74, 185.
 Monk of Montauban, the, 160.
 Monteux, 178-180, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 194.
 Road to, from Villeren, 179.
 Montmajour, 69, 205-210.
 Chapel of tenth century, 205.
 Chapel of Ste. Croix, 208, 210.
 Church of St. Peter, 206.
 Cloister, 205.
 Mourières, 72.
 Moux, 143.
 Musée Arlatan, 32.
 Lapidaire, 236.
 Réattu, Arles, 218, 220.
 Mythas, 247.

Narbonne, 90.
 Neptune, 72.
 Nerluc, 66, 120.
 Nicolas de Froment, 98, 123.
 Nicolette, 40-47.
 Nîmes, 297-316.
 Amphitheatre, 301, 302.
 Jardin de la Fontaine, 299.
 Maison Carrée (Temple of Diana), 300, 301.
 Nymphæum, 300, 304.
 Pont du Gard, 302, 304.
 Spanish Bull-Fight, 304-316.
 Nobel Prize, 32.
 Notre Dame des Doms, 156, 158, 178.
 Notre Dame de la Garde, Marseilles, 90.
 Les Martigues, 79.
 Noves, 168.
 Nymphæum, 300, 304.
 Orange, 1-6, 103.
 Church, the, 3.
 Cypresses, the, 3.
 Road to Carpentras, 6.
 Road to, from Aix, 97.
 Roman Theatre, 1-3.
 Roman Triumphal Arch, 5.
 Waiter, 4, 5.
 Padua, Shrew of, 82.
 Palace of Constantine, (Les Thermes) 220, 221.
 Palace of the Popes, 156.
 Palais de Justice, Arles, 235.
 Palestine, 118.
 Pan, 248.
 Paradou, 62.
 Road to, 68, 111, 114.
 Paris, Gaston, 161.
 Parmenas, 118.
 Pastor (matador), 312.
 Pastorela, 161.
 Pater, Walter, 162.
 Pernes, 173, 180.
 Petrarch, 156, 168, 170, 172.
 Phallus, the, 212.
 Philip the Bold, 128, 134.
 Philippe le Bel, Tower of, 148.
 Philippe de Cabassole, 170.
 Phillippe Egalité, 94.
 Picadors, 302, 306, 307, 311, 313, 314.
 Pierre de Provence, 127, 161.
 Pierre de Vidal, 160.

Pieverde, 168.
 Place des Hommes (Place du Forum), Arles, 218, 221.
 Plutarch, 106.
 Pont du Gard, 302, 303.
 Pope, the, and Provençals, 273.
 Port of Grau du Roi, 125.
 Porte d'Orange (see Carpentras).
 Pourrières, 66, 103-108.
 Hotel, the, 105.
 Vieille Fontaine, 106.
 Procession to the Sea, 274.
 Provençals and the Pope, 273.
 Psalmodi, Abbey of, 129.
 Puntillero, 308, 315.
 Racine, 114.
 Raimon Vidal, 158.
 Raymond VII., 48.
 Raymond des Baux, 62.
 Raymond de Trencaval, 138.
 Rehearsal of Mireille, 280, 281.
 René of Anjou, 34, 98, 99, 100, 102, 122, 123.
 Reynaud, 82.
 Rhône, 116, 146.
 Richard Cœur de Lion, 159.
 Rienzi, 156.
 Rieu, Charloun, 112-115.
 Rocher des Doms, 148.
 Roi Soleil, 100.
 Roman Circus, Arles, 235.
 Roman Courtesan, 212.
 Romeo and Juliet, 161.
 Roumanille, Jousè, 158, 163.
 Rudel, Jaufre, 162.
 Rudel, Sir Elias, 161.
 Rue des Matelots, Arles, 222.
 Rue des Pilotes, Arles, 222.
 Saboly, 174.
 Saint André, Fort, 164.
 Sainte Baume, 120.
 Saint Bénézet—
 Bridge of, 148, 149, 155.
 Legend of, 149-153.
 Saint Cassat, 109.
 Sainte Croix, Chapelle de, 208, 210.
 Saint Didier, 172, 173, 174, 185-187, 194-197, 202.
 Saint Gens, 172-174, 180, 181, 185-202.
 Bed of, 198.
 Cross of Meeting, 200.

Saint Gens—*continued*.

- Fête at St. Didier, 194-197.
 Miraculous Fountain, 201.
 Mistral and, 180, 181.
 Procession from Montoux, 193.
 Service at the Hermitage, 198, 199.
 Saint Gilles, Abbey of, 239, 255-257.
 Saint Honorat, Church, Arles, 231.
 Saint Jacques, Hermitage, 21.
 Saint Joseph of Arimathea, 118.
 Saint Louis (Louis IX.), 129, 130, 131, 134, 138, 140.
 Sainte Marie du Lac, 174.
 Saintes Maries (see *Les Saintes*).
 Saint Martha, 52-56, 118, 120.
 Saint Maximin, 118, 120.
 Saint Médard, Night of, 146, 147.
 Saint Nazaire, Cathedral, 136, 137.
 Saint Pansi, 248.
 Saint Peter (Montmajour), 206.
 Saint Rémy, 23-30, 71, 72, 106, 110.
 Church, 25.
 Maid of, 23-28, 106, 110.
 Monuments (Roman), 28-30.
 Sainte Sarah, 119, 120, 121, 267, 268.
 Saint Trophimus, 118, 120, 206.
 Cathedral of (see *Arles*).
 Saint Véran, Cathedral of, 17.
 Saint Victoire, Mount, 56, 64, 102, 104, 106.
 Saint Victor, Church of (see *Marseilles*).
 Saint Vincent de Paul, Church of (see *Marseilles*).
 Salon, 67, 102.
 Road to, 109.
 Castle of Nostradamus, 110.
 Saracens, 154, 155, 171, 224.
 Sarcophagi, Roman and Early Christian, 248, 250.
 Sarriens, 7.
 Sauge, La, 169.
 Savaric de Mauleon, 161.
 Septimius Servius, 301.
 Serenade (Serena), the, 161.
 Servius Alexander, 301.
 Sestina, the, 161.
 Shepherds of Camargue (see *Camargue*).
 Silk-worms, 252, 254.
 Simon de Montfort, 48, 50, 57, 137, 260.
 Soquety, 98.
 Sorgue, the, 169, 170.
 Swinburne, A. C., 161.
 Tarascon, 52, 209.
 Château of King Rémy, 40, 52.
 Road to St. Rémy, 57.
 Tarasque, La, 55, 56, 99, 106.
 Taven, the Sorcerer, 68.
 Tensò, the, 161.
 Theatre of Arles (ancient), 217, 218
 Theatre of Orange (ancient), 1-3.
 Tore-lore, 44.
 Toulouse, 137, 138.
 Tremaie, the, 65.
 Trets, 105, 108.
 Trille, La, 261-264.
 Trinquetaille, 116, 246.
 Triumphal Arches (see *Orange, Carpentras, St. Rémy*).
 Troubadours, 158-163.
 Trou des Fées, 68.
 Trouvères, 114.
 Urban v., Pope, 91.
 Vaccarès, the, 264, 291, 292, 293, 294.
 Valley of Benedictions, 164.
 Vaucluse, 169, 170-172.
 Venice of the Midi (see *Martigues*), 72-88.
 Ventoux, Mont, 3, 6, 8.
 Venus of Arles, 247, 301.
 of Milos, 247.
 as Christian Saint, 250.
 Vestal Virgins, 213.
 Villeneuve les Avignon, 164-167.
 Villeneuve les Avignon, Fort St. André, 164, 165.
 Villeneuve les Avignon, Tour Philippe le Bel, 164.
 Villeneuve les Avignon, Valley of Benedictions, 164.
 Villeren, 178.
 Villon, François, 162.
 Visigoths, 134.
 Vulture, Egyptian, 293.
 Watts, F. G., 247.
 Wedding Party, 142, 143.
 White Horses (see *Camargue*).
 Wild Men, Story of, 58, 59.
 William IX., Count of Poitiers, 159.
 Winchester, 89.

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